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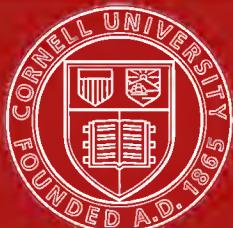
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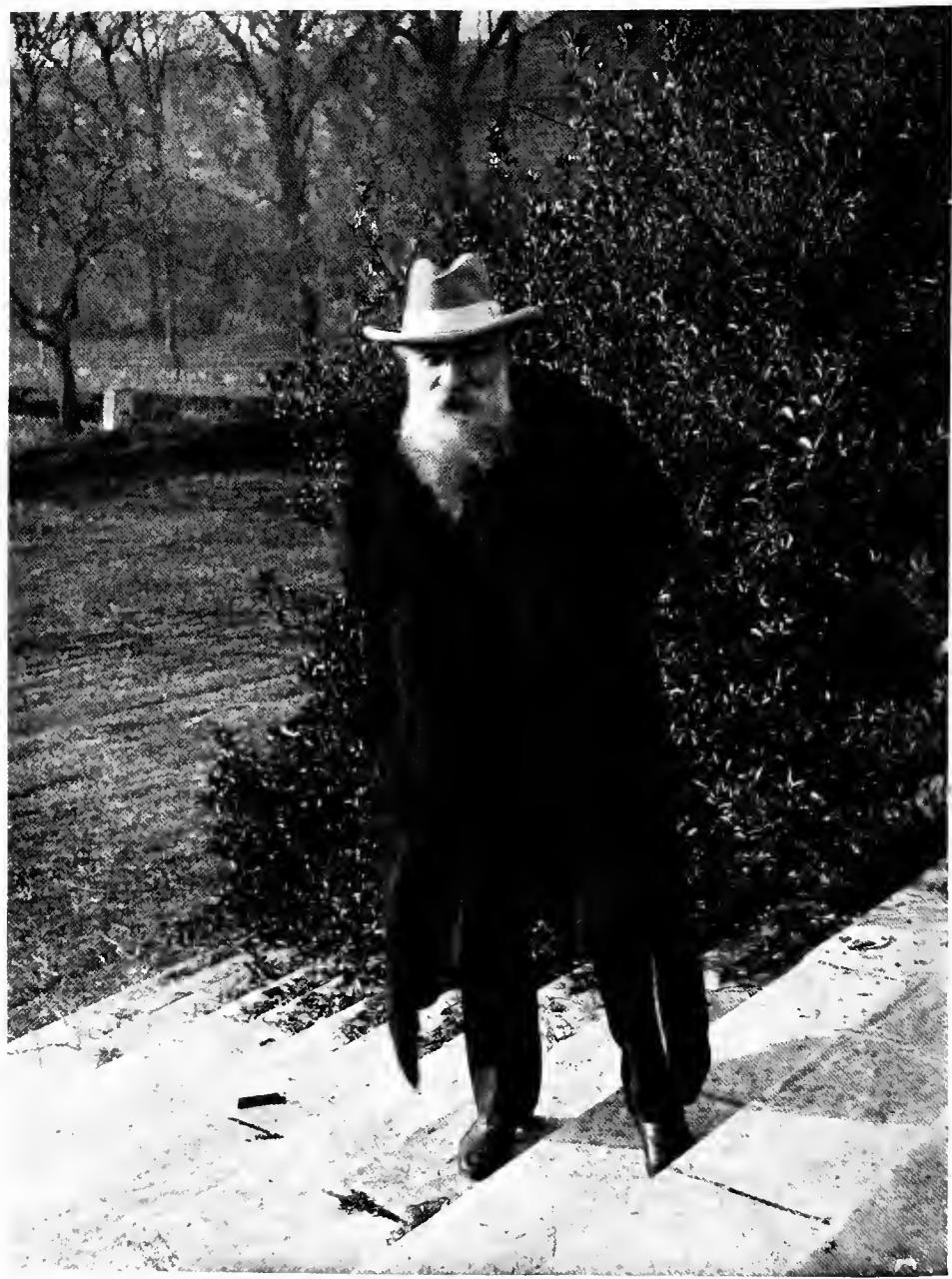




**RODIN**  
**THE MAN AND HIS ART**







RODIN PHOTOGRAPHED ON THE STEPS OF THE HOTEL BIRON





RODIN  
THE MAN AND HIS ART  
WITH LEAVES FROM HIS  
NOTE-BOOK

COMPILED BY JUDITH CLADEL  
AND TRANSLATED BY S. K. STAR

WITH INTRODUCTION BY JAMES HUNEKER  
AND ILLUSTRATED WITH PHOTOGRAPHS



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## AUGUSTE RODIN

BY JAMES HUNEKER

### I

Of Auguste Rodin one thing may be said without fear of contradiction: among his contemporaries to-day he is preëminently the master. Born at Paris, 1840,—the natal year of his friends, Claude Monet and Zola—in humble circumstances, without a liberal education, the young Rodin had to fight from the beginning; fight for bread as well as an art schooling. He was not even sure of his vocation. An accident determined it. He became a workman in the atelier of the sculptor, Carrier-Belleuse, though not until he had failed at the Beaux-Arts (a stroke of luck for his genius), and after he had enjoyed some tentative instruction under the animal sculptor, Barye (he was not a steady pupil of Barye, nor did he care to remain with him) he went to Belgium and “ghosted” for other sculptors; it was his privilege or misfortune to have been the anonymous assistant of a half dozen sculptors. He mastered the technique of his art by the sweat of his brow before he began to make music upon his own instrument. How his first work, “The Man with the

Broken Nose," was refused by the Salon jury is history. He designed for the Sèvres porcelain works. He executed portrait busts, architectural ornaments, caryatids; all styles that were huddled in the studios and yards of sculptors he essayed. No man knew his trade better, although it is said that with the chisel of the *practicien* Rodin was never proficient; he could not, or would not, work at the marble *en bloc*. His sculptures to-day are in the museums of the world, and he is admitted to possess "talent" by academic men. Rivals he has none. His production is too personal. Like Richard Wagner he has proved a *upas* tree for lesser artists—he has deflected, or else absorbed them. His friend Eugene Carrière warned young sculptors not to study Rodin too curiously. Carrière was wise, yet his art of portraiture was influenced by Rodin; swimming in shadow his enigmatic heads have more the quality of Rodin's than the mortuary art of academic sculpture.

A profound student of light and movement, Rodin by deliberate amplification of the surfaces of his statues, avoiding dryness and harshness of outline, secures a zone of radiancy, a luminosity which creates the illusion of reality. He handles values in clay as a painter does his tones. He gets the design of the outline by movement which continually modifies the anatomy; the secret of the Greeks, he believes. He

studies his profiles successively in full light, obtaining volume—or planes—at once and together; successive views of one movement. The light plays with more freedom upon his amplified surfaces, intensified in the modeling by enlarging the lines. The edges of certain parts are amplified, deformed, falsified, and we enjoy light-swept effects, luminous emanations. This deformation, he declares, was always practised by the great sculptors to snare the undulating appearance of life. Sculpture, he asserts, is the “art of the hole and lump, not of clear, well-smoothed, unmodeled figures.” Finish kills vitality. Yet Rodin can chisel a smooth nymph, if he so wills, but her flesh will ripple and run in the sunlight. His art is one of accents. He works by profile in depth, not by surfaces. He swears by what he calls “cubic truth”; his pattern is a mathematical figure; the pivot of art is balance, i.e., the opposition of volumes produced by movement. Unity haunts him. He is a believer in the correspondence of things, of continuity in nature. He is mystic, as well as a geometrician. Yet such a realist is he that he quarrels with any artist who does not recognize “the latent heroic in every natural movement.”

Therefore he does not force the pose of his model, preferring attitudes or gestures voluntarily adopted. His sketch books, as vivid, as copious, as the drawings of Hokusai—he is studious of Japanese art—are swift

## INTRODUCTION

memoranda of the human machine as it dispenses its normal muscular motions. Rodin, draughtsman, is as surprisingly original as the sculptor Rodin. He will study a human foot for months, not to copy it, but to master the secret of its rhythms. His drawings are the swift notations of a sculptor whose eye is never satisfied, whose desire to pin to paper the most evanescent vibrations of the human machine is almost a mania. The model may tumble down anywhere, in any contortion or relaxation he or she wishes. Practically instantaneous is the method of Rodin to register the fleeting attitudes, the first shivering surface. He rapidly draws with his eye on the model. It is often a mere scrawl, a silhouette, a few enveloping lines. But there is vitality in it all, and for his purpose, a notation of a motion. But a sculptor has made these extraordinary drawings, not a painter. It may be well to observe the distinction. And he is the most rhythmic sculptor among the moderns. Rhythm means for him the codification of beauty. Because, with a vision quite virginal, he has observed, he insists that he has affiliations with the Greeks. But if his vision is Greek his models are French, while his forms are more Gothic than the pseudo-Greek of the academy.

As Mr. W. C. Brownell wrote: "Rodin reveals rather than constructs beauty . . . no sculptor has carried expression further; and expression means indi-

vidual character completely exhibited rather than conventionally suggested.” Mr. Brownell was the first critic to point out that Rodin’s art was more nearly related to Donatello’s than to Michael Angelo’s. He is in the legitimate line of Gallic sculpture, the line of Goujon, Puget, Rude, Barye. Dalou, the celebrated sculptor, did not hesitate to assert that the Dante portal is “one of the most, if not the most, original and astonishing pieces of sculpture of the nineteenth century.”

This Dante gate, begun thirty years ago, not finished yet—and probably never to be—is an astoundingly plastic fugue, with death, the devil, hell, and human passions, for a complicated four-voiced theme. I first saw the composition at the Rue de l’Université atelier. It is as terrifying a conception as the Last Judgment. Nor does it miss the sonorous and sorrowful grandeur of the Medici Tombs. Yet how different. How feverish, how tragic. Like all great men working in the grip of a unifying idea, Rodin modified the technique of sculpture so that it would serve him as sound does a musical composer. A lover of music his inner ear may dictate the vibrating rhythms of his forms; his marbles are ever musical, ever in modulation, not “frozen music,” as Goethe said of Gothic architecture, but silent, swooning music. This Gate is a Frieze of Paris, as deeply significant of modern inspiration and

sorrow as the Parthenon Frieze is the symbol of the great clear beauty of Hellas. Dante inspired this monstrous yet ennobled masterpiece, and Baudelaire's poetry filled many of its chinks and crannies with ignoble writhing shapes; shapes of dusky fire that, as they tremulously stand above the gulf of fear, wave ineffectual and desperate hands as if imploring destiny.

But Rodin is not all hell-fire and tragedy. Of singular delicacy and exquisite proportion are his marbles of youth, of springtide, of the joy and desire of life. At Paris, 1900, in his special exhibition Salle, Europe and America awoke to the beauty of these haunting visions. Not since Keats and Wagner and Swinburne has love been voiced so sweetly, so romantically, so fiercely. Though he disclaims understanding the Celtic spirit one might say that there is Celtic magic, Celtic mystery in his lyrical work. He pierces to the core the frenzy of love, and translates it into lovely symbols. For him nature is the sole mistress—his sculptures are but variations on her themes. He knows the emerald route, and all the semitones of sensuousness. Fantasy, passion, paroxysmal madness are there, yet what elemental power is in his "Adam," as the gigantic first man painfully heaves himself up from the earth to the posture that differentiates him forever from the beast. Here, indeed, two natures are at strife. And "Mother Eve" suggests the sorrows and

shames that are to be the lot of her seed; her very loins crushed by the future generations hidden within them. One may freely walk about the "Burghers of Calais" as Rodin did when he modeled them; a reason for the vital quality of the group. Around all his statues we may walk; he is not a sculptor of a single attitude but a hewer of humans. Consider the "Balzac." It is not Balzac the writer, but Balzac the prophet, the seer, the enormous natural force that was Balzac. Rodin is himself a seer. That is why these two spirits converse across the years, as do the Alpine peaks in a certain striking parable of Turgenev's. Doubtless in bronze Rodin's "Balzac" will arouse less wrath from the unimaginative; in plaster it produces the effect of a snowy surging monolith.

As a portraitist Rodin is the unique master of characters. His women are gracious delicate masks; his men cover octaves in virility and variety. That he is extremely short-sighted has not been dealt with in proportion to the significance of the fact. It accounts for his love of exaggerated surfaces, his formless extravagance, his indefiniteness in structural design; perhaps, too, for his inability, or let us say, his lack of sympathy, for the monumental. He is a sculptor of intimate emotions. And while we think of him as a Cyclops destructively wielding a huge hammer, he is more ardent in his search for the supersubtle nuance. But there is

always the feeling of breadth, even when he models an eyelid. We are confronted by the paradox of an artist as torrential as Rubens or Wagner, carving in a wholly charming style a segment of a child's back, before which we are forced to exclaim: *Donatello come to life!* His myopic vision, then, may have been his artistic salvation; he seems to rely as much on his delicate tactile sense as on his eyes. His fingers are as sensitive as a violinist's. At times he seems to model both tone and color.

A poet, a precise, sober workman of art, with a peasant strain in him, he is like Millet, and, like Millet, near to the soil. A natural man, yet crossed by nature with a perverse strain; the possessor of a sensibility exalted and dolorous; morbid, sick-nerved, and as introspective as Heine; a visionary and a lover of life, close to the periphery of things; an interpreter of Baudelaire; Dante's *alter ego* in his grasp of the wheel of eternity, in his passionate fling at nature; withal a sculptor, profound and tortured, transposing rhythm into the terms of his art, Rodin is a statuary who, while having affinities with classic and romantic schools, is the most startling apparition of his century. And to the century which he has summed up so plastically and emotionally he has propounded questions that only unborn years may answer. He has a hundred faults

to which he opposes one imperious excellence—a genius, sombre, magical and overwhelming.

## II

Rodin deserves well of our young century, the old did so incontinently batter him. The anguish of his own “Hell’s Portal” he endured before he molded its clay between his thick clairvoyant fingers. Misunderstood, therefore misrepresented, he with his pride and obstinacy aroused—the one buttressing the other—was not to be budged from his formulas or the practice of his sculpture. Then the art world swung unamiably, unwillingly, toward him, perhaps more from curiosity than conviction. He became famous. And he is more misunderstood than ever. He has been called *rusé*, even a fraud, while the wholesale denunciation of his work as erotic is unluckily still green in our memory. The sculptor, who in 1877 was accused of “faking” his lifelike “Age of Bronze”—now in the Luxembourg—by taking a mold from the living model, also experienced the discomfiture of being assured some years later that, not understanding the art of modeling, his statue of Balzac was only an evasion of difficulties. And this to a man who in the interim had wrought so many masterpieces. A year or two ago, after his magnificent offer to the city of Paris of his works, there was

much malevolent criticism from certain quarters. Rodin takes all this philosophically. He points out that the artist is the only one to-day who creates in joy. Mankind as a majority hates its work. Workmen no longer consider their various avocations with proper pride—this was a favorite thesis of Ruskin, William Morris, and Renoir. Furthermore, argues Rodin, the artist is indispensable. He reveals the beauty and meaning of life to his fellows. He struggles against the false, the conventional, and the used-up; but the French sculptor slyly adds: “No one may benefit mankind with impunity.” He considers himself as having a religious nature; all artists are temperamentally religious, he contends, though his religion is not precisely of the kind that would appeal to the orthodox.

To give Rodin his due he stands prosperity not quite as well as poverty. In every great artist there is a large area of self-esteem; it is the reservoir from which he must, during years of drought or defeat, draw upon to keep fresh the soul. Without the consoling fluid of egotism genius would soon perish in the dust of despair. But fill this source to the brim, accelerate the speed of its current, and artistic deterioration may ensue. Rodin has been fatuously called a second Michael Angelo—as if there could ever be a replica of any human. He has been hailed as a modern Praxit-

eles; which is nonsense. And he is often damned as a myopic decadent whose insensibility to the pure line and lack of architectonic have been elevated by his admirers into sorry virtues. Nevertheless, is Rodin justly appraised? Do his friends not over-glorify him? Nothing so stales a demigod's image as the perfumes burned before it by worshipers; the denser the smoke the sooner crumbles the feet of their idol.

However, in the case of Rodin the Fates have so contrived their malicious game that at no point in his career has he been without the company of envy and slander. Often when he had attained a summit he would be thrust down into a deeper valley. He has mounted to triumphs and fallen to humiliations; but his spirit has never been quelled; and if each acclivity he scales is steeper, the air atop has grown purer, more stimulating, and below the landscape spreads wider before him. With Dante he can say: "La montagna ch'e drizza voi ch'e il mondo fece torti." Rodin's mountain has always straightened in him what the world made crooked. The name of his mountain is Art. A born nonconformist, Rodin makes the fourth of that group of nineteenth century artists—Richard Wagner, Henrik Ibsen, Edouard Manet—who taught a deaf, dumb, and blind world to hear, see, think, and feel.

Is it not dangerous to say of a genius that his work

alone should count, that his personality is negligible? Though Rodin has followed Flaubert's advice to artists to lead an ascetic life that their art might be the more violent, nevertheless his career, colorless as it may seem to those who love better stage players and the comedy of society—this laborious life of a poor sculptor should not be passed over. He always becomes enraged at the prevailing notion that fire descends from heaven upon genius. Rodin believes in but one inspiration—nature. Nature can do no wrong. He swears that he does not invent, he copies nature. He despises improvisation, has contemptuous words for "fatal facility," and, being a slow-thinking, slow-moving man, he only admits to his councils those who have conquered art, not by assault, but by stealth and after years of hard work. He sympathizes with Flaubert's patient, toiling days. He praises Holland because after Paris it seems slow. "Slowness is beauty," he declares. In a word, he has evolved a theory and practice of his art that is the outcome—like all theories, all techniques—of his own temperament. And that temperament is giant-like, massive, ironic, grave, strangely perverse; it is the temperament of a magician of art doubled by a mathematician's.

Books are written about him. With picturesque precision De Maupassant described him in "Notre

Cœur." Rodin is tempting as a psychologic study. He appeals to the literary critic, though his art is not "literary." His modeling arouses tempests, either of dispraise or idolatry. To see him steadily after a visit to his studios at Paris or Meudon is difficult. If the master be present then one feels the impact of a personality that is misty as the clouds about the base of a mountain, and as impressive as the bulk of the mountain. Yet a sane, pleasant, unassuming man interested in his clay—that is, unless you happen to discover him interested in humanity. If you watch him well you may in turn find yourself watched; those peering eyes possess a vision that plunges into the depths of your soul. And this master of marble sees the soul as nude as he sees the body. It is the union in him of sculptor and psychologist that places Rodin apart from other artists. These two arts (psychology is the art of divination) he practises in a medium that hitherto did not betray potentialities for such performances. Walter Pater is right in maintaining that each art has its separate subject matter; still, in the debatable province of Rodin's sculpture we find strange emotional power, hints of the pictorial, and a rare suggestion of music. This, obviously, is not playing the game according to the rules of Lessing and his *Laocoön*.

Let us drop the old æsthetic rule of thumb and con-

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fess that during the last century a new race of artists sprang up and in their novel element they, like flying-fishes, revealed to a wondering world their composite structure. Thus we find Berlioz painting with his instrumentation; Franz Liszt, Tschaikowsky, and Richard Strauss filling their symphonic poems with drama and poetry; while Richard Wagner invented an art which he believed embraced all the others. And there was Ibsen who employed the dramatic form as a vehicle for his anarchistic ideas; and Nietzsche, who was such a poet that he was able to sing a mad philosophy into life; not to forget Rossetti, who painted poems and made poetry of his pictures. Sculpture was the only art that resisted this universal disintegration, this imbroglio of the seven arts. No sculptor before Rodin had dared to shiver the syntax of stone. For sculpture is a static, not a dynamic art—is it not? Let us observe the rules though we call up the chill spirit of the cemetery. What Mallarmé attempted with French poetry Rodin accomplished in clay. His marbles do not represent, but present, emotion; they are the evocation of emotion itself; as in music, form and substance coalesce. If he does not, as does Mallarmé, arouse “the silent thunder afloat in the leaves,” he can summon from the vasty deep the spirits of love, hate, pain, sin, despair, beauty, ecstasy; above all, ecstasy. Now, the primal gift of ecstasy is bestowed

upon few artists. Keats had it, and Shelley; Byron, despite his passion, missed it. We find it in Swinburne, he had it from the first. Few French poets know it. Like the “cold devils” of Félicien Rops, coiled in frozen ecstasy, the fiery blasts of hell about them, Charles Baudelaire boasted the dangerous gift. Poe and Heine felt ecstasy, and Liszt. Wagner was the master-adept of ecstasy: *Tristan and Isolde!* And in the music of Chopin ecstasy is pinioned within a bar, the soul rapt to heaven in a phrase. Richard Strauss has given us a variation on the theme of ecstasy; voluptuousness troubled by pain, the soul tormented pathologically.

Rodin is of this tormented choir. He is revealer of its psychology. It may be decadence, as any art is in its decadence which stakes the part against the whole. The same was said of Beethoven by the followers of Haydn, and the successors of Richard Strauss—Debussy, Stravinsky, and Schoenberg—are abused quite as violently as the Wagnerites abused Richard Strauss, turning against him the same critical artillery that was formerly employed against Wagner. Nowadays, Rodin is looked on as superannuated, as a reactionary by the younger men, the Cubists and Futurists, who spoil marble with their iconoclastic chisels and canvas with their paint-tubes.

That this ecstasy should be aroused by pictures of

love and death, as in the case of Poe and Baudelaire, Wagner and Strauss and Rodin, is not to be judged an artistic crime. In the Far East they hypnotize neophytes with a bit of broken mirror, for in the kingdom of art there are many mansions. Possibly it was a relic of his early admiration for Baudelaire that set Wagner to extorting ecstasy from his orchestra by images of love and death. And no doubt the temperament which seeks such synthesis, a temperament commoner in medieval times than ours, was inherent in Wagner, as it is in Rodin. Both men play with the same counters: love and death. In Pisa we may see (attributed by Vasari) Orcagna's fresco of the Triumph of Death. The sting of the flesh and the way of all flesh are inextricably blended in Rodin's Gate of Hell. His principal reading for half a century has been Dante and Baudelaire; the Divine Comedy and "Les Fleurs du Mal" are the keynotes in the grandiose white symphony of the French sculptor. Love and life, and bitterness and death rule the themes of his marbles. Like Beethoven and Wagner, he breaks academic rules, for he is Auguste Rodin, and where he magnificently achieves, lesser men fail or fumble. His large, tumultuous music is alone for his chisel to ring out and to sing.

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## **THE CAREER OF RODIN**



# RODIN

## THE MAN AND HIS ART

### THE CAREER OF RODIN

SEVERAL years have already gone by since the career of Rodin attained its full growth. From now on, therefore, it can be envisaged as a whole, and we can trace the formation and the unfolding of his complex talent and disentangle the influences that have directed and sustained it.

In the course of the chapters that follow, Rodin, with the authority, the calm strength, and the lucidity that characterize his thought, often speaks himself of these influences, but rather in a casual, gossipy, reminiscent vein, reflecting his personal observations. He does not attempt to disengage the broad lines by which he has reached the summit of art, or to map out, so to speak, that scheme of his intellectual development which so naturally appertains to the man who has reached the apogee of talent and which he contemplates with the satisfaction of a strategist face to face with the plan of the battles he has won.

It is to living writers that he seems to address himself. Rodin to-day can be studied like an old master, Dona-

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

tello, Michelangelo, or Pierre Puget. One perceives quite in its entirety the distinct, the rigorously sustained plan that he has followed with unswerving will in order to realize himself; and the witnesses, the historians of this heroic life of the sculptor, have the advantage of being able to trace it with exactitude, as they could not do in the case of a vanished artist. They are able to interrogate the hero in person; they are able to consult with Rodin himself, who is admirably intuitive and quite aware of what he owes to certain favorable conditions of his life and above all to his illustrious forerunners, those who have fought before him on the battle-field of high art.

The study of nature, of the antique, Greek and Roman, of the art of medieval France and that of the Renaissance—these are the springs at which he has constantly refreshed one of the most irrefutable sculptural talents that has ever been known. These are the expressions of the beautiful among which his profound and searching thought has traveled unceasingly, seeking to attain to a still larger vision, a more exact understanding of that most magnificent of all the arts, sculpture.

The superior man is always the product of an exceptional gift and of an energy peculiar to himself, which effectuates itself despite circumstances. He is the highest incarnation of the spirit, of the struggle for ex-

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istence. In the case of an artist the struggle is all the more severe, for he has nothing but himself to impose upon the world and he has, as weapons of offense and defense, nothing but his intelligence, the tiny substance of his brain. It is therefore only by means of the history of his intellectual life that one can understand him. External happenings only very slightly influence the obstinate march of true genius toward the accomplishment of its destiny. At most they delay it but a few hours. It forces its way through the most difficult obstacles; it even makes use of these obstacles in order to redouble its strength and confirm its superiority. Nothing impedes the formidable will of those who are under the spell of beauty, those who see truth and know it and desire to express what they see. They can no more escape the fruition of their faculties than the giant can escape the attainment of his full stature.

Rodin has been one of these. Certainly he has been assisted by circumstances, but above everything how has he not compelled circumstances to assist him?

What demands preëminent recognition in his case is the gift, a splendid, a dazzling gift for the plastic arts, the realization of which has been imposed upon him, as it were, by the command of destiny. Whence did it come? From whom did he inherit it? From what ancestor, sensitive to the enchantment of beauty, suffering, and in travail from the necessity of proclaiming it, but

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

imperfectly endowed and powerless to forge for himself a talent in order to express the tremors of his soul? It is a mystery. No one can tell, Rodin himself least of all. Science has not yet taught us anything about those obscure combinations, those endless preferences of the vital force, thanks to which a person possesses the faculties of genius. In this, as in other things, we are unable to divine the cause and can only marvel at the effect, the prodigy.

Discredited to-day are the theories of Lombroso and his school, once so warmly welcomed by mediocre minds athirst for equality, in which great men were considered as degenerates of a superior variety, and the most sensitive spirits qualified as candidates for the madhouse! All one can say is that nature abhors equality, that the indwelling will delights in raising up lofty mountain masses above the uniformity of the plains and the valor of the chosen few above the multitude. The function of the man of genius is, precisely, to possess in a supreme degree the sense of inequality and to transcribe its infinite nuances in their ever-changing, ever-moving, ever-renewed variety. He alone perceives the diversities whose play is the law of the universe itself, and he grasps them equally in a fragment of inanimate matter and in the vastest aspects of the world. Far from being half mad, this unique being, this prodigious mirror of a million facets, achieves his aim only because

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he possesses far more intelligence than the most brilliant of his contemporaries, because he is in touch with a more profound order of things and a more comprehensive method, because he combines the qualities of continuity in sensation and of discernment which constitute that supreme sensibility of all the senses acting together—taste. But it does not please ordinary mortals to believe things of this kind, and one can easily understand how the crowd, repudiating any such humiliating notion, are all too willing to follow the lead of exotic pseudo-scientists and look upon great men as lunatics, considering themselves far more rational.

As to what Rodin himself thinks of this privilege that Providence has conferred on him, there is no telling; he has never talked very much about it. The fact is, he has such faith in the value of hard work and will-power, he knows so well how extraordinarily much of these even the most exceptional natures have to exert in order to accomplish anything, that this privilege of divine right, otherwise just as authentic as that which sovereigns in former times profited by, amounts to nothing in the end but the account which he draws up in order to calculate the sum of his efforts. "When I was quite young, as far back as I remember, I drew," he says; "but the gift is nothing without the will to make it worth while. The artist must have the patience of water that eats away the rock drop by drop." Alas!

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will and work, Master, are also gifts; but the supreme spirit maliciously amuses itself by leading us into error, inspiring us with the illusion that it lies with us to acquire them.

Rodin's case, then, is an example of absolute predestination, assisted by a will of iron. One must add also the happy influence of the varied environment in which his life has been placed and the excellent artistic education he received in the schools where he studied, an education that was fruitful, thanks to the preservation of the true traditions of French art, kept alive in the schools since the eighteenth century.

### CHILDHOOD. YOUTH. FIRST STUDIES

Auguste Rodin is the son of a Norman father and a Lorrainese mother. Each of these two French provinces, Normandy and Lorraine, produces a race eminently realistic, but realistic in quite different ways.

The Lorrainer, opinionated and courageous, hardy in character, and vigorous like his country itself, sees things clearly and precisely in the light of a spirit that has been fashioned by the age-old struggle between Teuton and Gaul on our eastern frontier. The things that surround him, the aspects of his native soil, like the sullen obstinacy of the enemy that seeks in vain to drag him away, present themselves to his eye as a reality





PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG GIRL  
A WORK OF RODIN'S YOUTH

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stripped of illusions. When one has to fight there is no time to dream, and one must be able to estimate with precision what one is fighting for. When the man of Lorraine utters his feeling about the things he loves and defends, it is with a loyalty rather dry in expression and impression, but also with a force of consciousness that is imposing.

As for the Norman, like his country he overflows with an abundance of life from which he derives a passionate need for the pleasures of sense. Far from stifling in him the love of the beautiful, this appetite for triumphant realities engenders, on the contrary, an exaltation of the senses that leads to the most exquisite taste in the production of art. Compounded of sensuality and mysticism, the twin characteristics of these rich spirits, very like those of Belgium, to whom, by virtue of ancient migrations, they are closely allied, the artists of Normandy necessarily respond to the manifold requirements of their temperament. We know with what a profusion of monuments, robust and imposing in structure and miraculously clothed in the most delicate lace-work of stone, the Gothic architects of Normandy have covered not only the soil of their province, but also, beyond the sea, that of the Two Sicilies, strewn even to this day with beautiful cloisters and sumptuous churches of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which the Norman Conquest carried there.

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The child of Normandy and Lorraine was born in Paris, November 14, 1840. His father was a simple employee. He dwelt in one of the oldest and most curious quarters of the great city, the Quartier Saint-Victor in the fifth *arrondissement*. Rodin saw the light in the rue de l'Arbalète. It is a little, hilly street, quite provincial in its aspect and its quietness, that winds among the rows of old houses, some low, as if crouched down, others narrow and high, as if they wished to look over their shoulders at what passes below, very like a crowd of living people. Its name, the rue de l'Arbalète, is full of suggestion of the Middle Ages, like that of the rue des Patriarches, in which it comes to an end, and that of the rue des Lyonnais and the rue de l'Epée-de-Bois, which are its neighbors. It crosses the famous rue Mouffetard near the little church of St. Médard on the last slopes of the Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève, which has been, since the thirteenth century, the seat of the university and the schools; below is the plain of the Gobelins, where once the river Bièvre ran exposed.

Even to the present day this corner of the city has not suffered too much from the destructive changes of modernity. At the time of the childhood of Rodin it was still virtually untouched. Crowded, picturesque, and in certain parts dirty and squalid, like an Oriental city, with its little interlacing streets, its countless

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shops, its swarms of people given over to a thousand familiar trades carried on in public,—open-air kitchens, fruit-stands, grocery shops, clothing shops, and shops of ironmongers, coal-venders, and wine-sellers,—it is an almost perfect fragment, a human fragment, of the old Gothic Paris.

Truly Rodin was fortunate: he was born in a chapter of Victor Hugo's "Notre Dame de Paris." Destiny preserved the first glances of his artist's eyes from the disenchanted banality of our modern streets. It placed before them, as if to give them a hatred of uniformity, as if to disgust him forever with the misdeeds of the straight line, adopted the world over by the rank and file of contemporary architects,—those congenitally blind and mutilated souls,—a population of houses having a physiognomy and a soul of their own, which, with their sloping roofs, their irregular gables, etch their amusing profiles against the sky and seem to gossip with the birds and the clouds, putting to shame the few regular buildings that have intruded and lost themselves amid this congregation so touched with spirituality.

All this Rodin saw; with a child's innocent eye, he absorbed all this fantasy of past ages; he studied the little shops with their low ceilings dating from the period of the gilds; he noted through the tiny panes of their windows the Rembrandtesque effects of shadow and golden light, in which the humblest objects live a

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life that is full of intimate mystery and familiar charm. About them he saw a people full of life, alert, awake, always in action, always in dispute, unconsciously falling into a thousand beautiful, simple attitudes, the eternal attitudes associated with drinking, eating, sleeping, working, and loving.

What admirable, powerful precepts this teaching, without effort, without professors, without pedantry, thus forever imposed upon the memory of the future sculptor! Yes, Rodin there enjoyed a priceless good fortune.

As child and young man, his walks and his duties took him incessantly past Notre Dame, the queen of cathedrals, appearing, from the heights of Ste. Geneviève, magnificently seated on the bank of the Seine that devotedly kisses its feet; in front of it, Ste. Etienne-du-Mont, surrounded by convents, with its nave, that treasure of grace bequeathed to us by the Renaissance. There also is the ancient little Roman church of St. Julien-le-Pauvre; and St. Sèverin, that sweet relic of Gothic art, about which lies unrolled the old *quartier des truands*, with the rues Galande de la Huchette and de la Parcheminerie, which the pick-axes of the housebreakers are now giving over to the universal ugliness.

The Panthéon and the buildings that surround it taught the young Rodin that the public monuments of

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the style of Louis XV, although colder and stiffer, still offer a certain grandeur by virtue of their beauty of proportion and character. Close beside the somewhat formal solemnity of these buildings, the Gardens of the Luxembourg that invite the passer-by with all their tender, smiling charm, the exquisite parterre, the elegant little pilastered palace, the Medici fountain, whose charming statues pour out their water that murmurs beneath the branches of the trees spread out above like a tent of lacework, taught him the enchantment of the architectural harmonies of the Renaissance, harmonies of chiseled stone, noble shadows, and carpeting flowers.

Like all artists, Rodin adores the Luxembourg. More than this, he would not for anything in the world see those statues of the queens of France banished, those enormous stone dolls of a quality, as regards sculpture, little calculated to satisfy lovers of rich modeling. No matter, he loves the gray mass they make under the fragrant summits of the limes and the hawthorns; they are part of the scenery of his youth; he remains faithful to them as to old playthings. Was it not these that he sketched in those first attempts of his?

His aptitude quickly revealed itself. This man, whom ignorant critics were to reproach one day with not knowing how to draw, handled the pencil from his earliest childhood.

His mother bought her provisions from a grocer in

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the neighborhood. The grocer wrapped up his rice, vermicelli, and dried prunes in bags made from cut-up illustrated papers and engravings that had been thrown away. Rodin got hold of these bags, and they were his first models. He copied these wretched images passionately.

Toward the age of twelve, he was sent to Beauvais, to the house of an uncle who undertook to bring him up. Beauvais and its unfinished cathedral was another silent lesson, never to be forgotten—that cathedral which is nothing but a choir, but how marvelous a choir!

Of course at the time he did not appreciate its splendor. With the indifference of his age, he studied its architecture and its sculpture, which, for that matter, all his contemporaries, even the cultivated, despised from the depth of their ignorance. That was the time when art critics and professors of esthetics denied Gothic art without comprehending it, the Roman school being in the ascendant in the admiration of the public. Nevertheless, the jewel in stone did not fail to speak in the language of beauty and truth to this predestined young man. His sensibility registered its impressions, noted down those points of comparison which he was to find later in the depths of his memory and which were to enable him to judge and appreciate. Under the vault of the majestic nave he listened to the mass, he took part in the grand, sacred drama, whose

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phrases touched his imagination profoundly, sometimes exalting it to the point of mysticism and impregnating it with the nobility of the symbols and of the Catholic ritual tempered by eighteen centuries of usage.

Rodin was placed in a boarding-school. He found the scholar's life dreary and dull; his comrades seemed to him noisy young barbarians, absorbed in brutal and too often vicious pastimes. Certain studies were repugnant to him, mathematics and *solfeggio*. Near-sighted, without being aware of it, he could not make out the figures and the notes the masters wrote on the blackboard; he understood nothing and was almost bored to death.

This myopia was destined to have the most vital influence on his art. Because of his difficulty in perceiving total effects, his instinct has only rarely led him to the composition of monuments on a very large scale, in which the architectural construction is of nearly as great importance as the sculpture proper. The most considerable that we owe to him is that of "The Burghers of Calais"; and there is also "The Gate of Hell," which, almost inexplicably, remained incomplete even in the very hour when it was given over as finished. The great sculptor, at the time when he turned it over to the founders, perhaps unconsciously experienced a lapse of vision, an insurmountable fatigue of the eyes, overstrained by the prolonged effort to grasp the ensemble

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of the edifice and the harmony of the countless details of this superb composition.

But if he has been turned aside, by his physical constitution, from monumental art, it has only served to concentrate him with all the more ardor upon the minute work of modeling, for which, by a sort of compensation, he is endowed with an eye whose penetration has had no equal since the time of the Renaissance.

At the age of fourteen he returned to Paris. His parents judged that the moment had come for him to choose a career. Observing his astonishing gifts, they decided to let him take up drawing, but, having small means, they were unable to provide him with special masters. They entered him at the School of Decorative Arts, another piece of good fortune.

This school, called by abbreviation the *Petite Ecole*, in distinction from the great school, that of the Beaux-Arts, is situated in the old rue de l'Ecole de Médecine, close to the Faculté de Médecine and the Sorbonne. It was founded in 1765, under the name of the Free School of Design, by the painter Jean-Jacques Bachelier, a clever artist and student of styles in art no longer practised or little known, who had been well thought of by Madame de Pompadour, the favorite of Louis XV, the charming and virtually official minister of fine arts during the reign of that monarch. It was she who placed Bachelier in charge of the *ateliers de décoration*.



LA PUCELLE



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*tion* at the Sèvres manufactory. In creating the Petite Ecole, the painter seemed to be following out, after the death of his gracious protectress, the impulse she had communicated to French art during her lifetime.

Thus we see Rodin at the school of the Marquise de Pompadour, placed once more in a *milieu* full of originality and life. He found himself there surrounded by a little world of beginners in every line, budding artists; almost everybody of his generation has passed through this course. They came there to learn to draw, paint, and model.

In the evening the halls were filled with amateurs who, after their day's work was over, sought to acquire a certain artistic skill as tapestry-workers, ornament-makers, workers in iron, marble, etc. They were energetic, turbulent, poor. Rodin, like them, was energetic and poor, but silent, laborious, and pertinacious. He applied himself to the copying of models of all sorts, most frequently red chalks by Boucher and plaster casts of animals, plants, and flowers.

The school had possessed these things since the eighteenth century and, like almost everything that was created in that bountiful epoch, they were very well done, composed after nature, their elegance full of warm truth; they were models in bold *ronde-bosse*. That is to say, they presented that quality of relief to which drawing, like sculpture, owes its rich oppositions

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of light and shadow. To those who copied them they communicated the science of relief, the fundamental basis of art, and the living suppleness of the best periods, which has almost entirely disappeared to-day.

One day Rodin entered the modeling class. He worked there after the antique. He had his first experience of working in clay; it was a revelation, an enchantment. He fell in love with this *métier*, which seemed to him the most seductive of all; he became obsessed with the desire to mold this soft material himself, to search in it for the form of things.

His first attempts overjoyed him; he was not fifteen years old and he had found his path!

We see him executing a fragment; he models the head, the hands, the arms, the legs, the feet; then he sets about the whole figure; there is no deception; there are no insurmountable difficulties for him; he understands at once the structure of the human body; in the phrase of the atelier, “*ses bonshommes tiennent*”; the arms and the legs adjust themselves naturally to the body: he is a born sculptor.

Every day he arrives at the class at eight o'clock in the morning; he works without faltering till noon, in company with five or six pupils. At that hour they stop work; they are happy; they leave their seats and take a turn about the model. In the evening things are different; from seven to nine, the class is over-full; one

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can study the model then only from a distance; a superficial, wretched method that is practised on a large scale at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and against which Rodin has protested all his life.

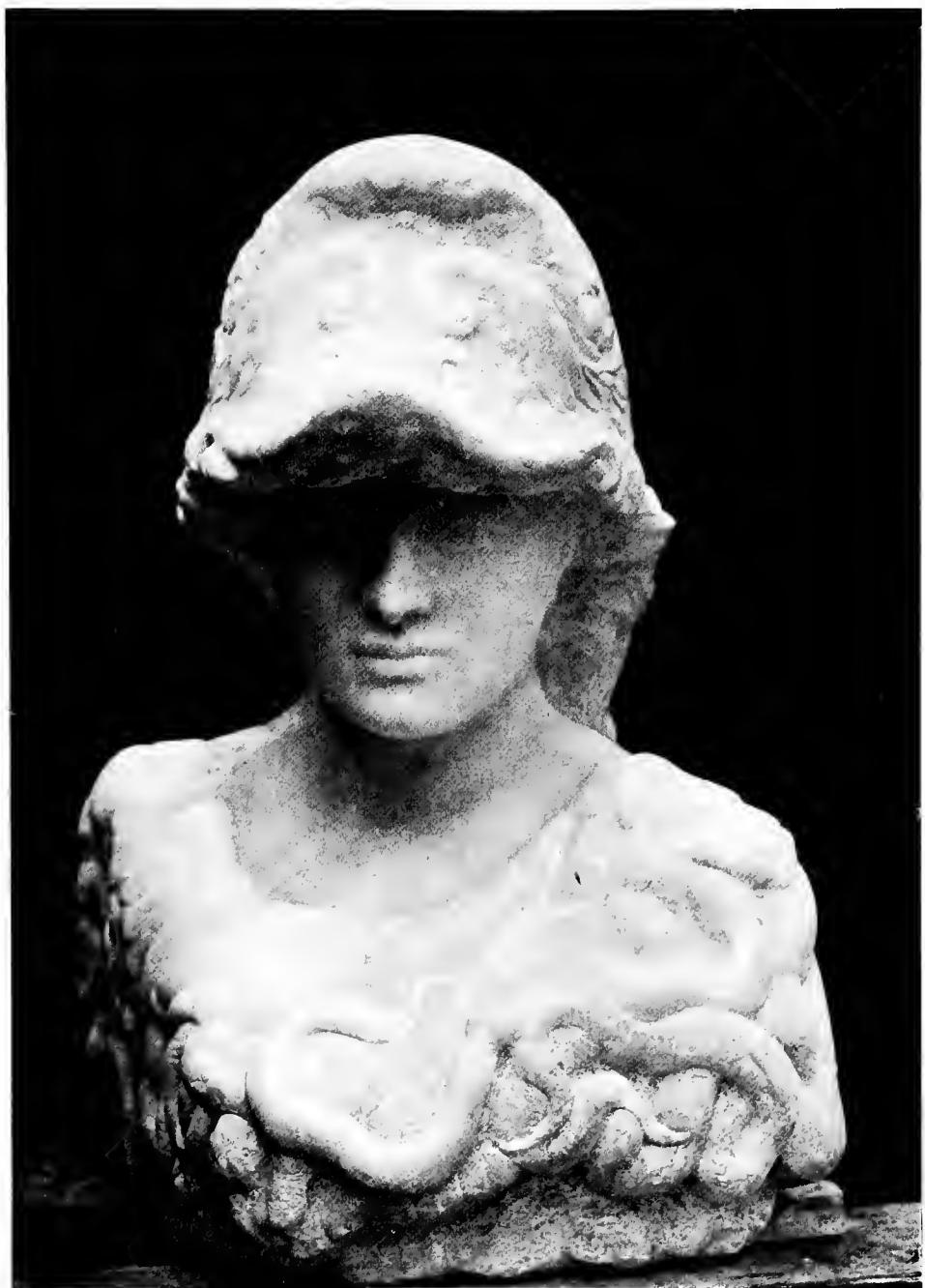
Thus we find him entered on his artistic career not as a dilettante, as an amateur, as happens too often, but as a veritable workman. Like General Kléber, he could long say, "My poverty has served me well; I am attached to it." It placed him, from his childhood, in the presence of realities. It steeped him in life itself. It safeguarded him from the artificial education that debilitates the young middle-class Frenchman and destroys in him the spirit of initiative and personality. It deprived him luckily of the pleasures that rich young men too easily offer themselves, the abuse of which renders them unsteady, capricious, and indifferent. Rigorously held to his path by necessity, he consecrated all his time and all his energies to study. He became diligent, serious, and prudent.

He had the opportunity of seeing his modeling corrected by Carpeaux. The great sculptor, in fact, taught at the Petite Ecole. Upon his return from Rome, he had asked for a modest post as an assistant master that would help to assure his equally modest existence; they had granted his request, but without seeking to give him anything more! His young pupils scarcely understood his high worth, the substantial and

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delicate grace of his talent, his voluptuous elegance, inherited from the eighteenth century and united with a certain nervous seductiveness that was altogether modern, a certain palpitating quality of the soul and of the flesh that had not been known before, manifesting itself through the ductility of his modeling. But instinctively they admired him; they marveled, among other things, at the precision and the rapidity of the corrections the master executed under their eyes. Later, when experience had come to him, Rodin greatly honored Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux; he was one of those for whom the appearance of the famous group "The Dance," in the parvis of the Opéra, was a veritable event. At that moment he discovered again in himself the influence of this beautiful spirit which had been slumbering in him since he left the Petite Ecole; then he became almost the disciple of Carpeaux. I know a figure of a bacchante of Rodin's, a marble that is almost unknown, the flesh of which is so supple and so light that one would say it was molded of wheat and honey and the work of the sculptor of "The Dance." There floats also in its countenance that spirituality, that expression as of a sort of angelic malice which Carpeaux seems to have borrowed occasionally from the figures of Leonardo da Vinci.

When the clocks of the Sorbonne quarter struck noon, Rodin left the Petite Ecole; he walked to the Louvre,



MINERVA



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eating, as he went, a roll and a cake of chocolate which was all he had for lunch. He sketched the antiques. From there he went on to the Galerie des Estampes at the Bibliothèque Nationale, where they loaned out, without any too much good will, misplaced as that is with students, the albums of plates after Michelangelo and Raphael and the great illustrated work, "L'Histoire de Costume Romain." Because of this miserliness of theirs, he did not always obtain the volumes he wished for, which were reserved for habitués who were better known. This did not prevent him from becoming initiated into the science of draperies. He executed hundreds of sketches from memory, at last developing in himself the faculty of remembering forms. From the rue de Richelieu, always on foot, he would repair to the Gobelin manufactory. There each day, from five to eight o'clock, he followed the course in design. Placed before nature itself, before the nude, he absorbed more excellent principles. The teaching of the eighteenth century was practised there also, and his work became permanently impregnated by it.

In the morning, at daybreak, before going to the Petite Ecole, he found the time to walk to an old painter's he knew, where he kept a number of canvases going. In the evening he made careful copies of the sketches he had jotted down at noon in the galleries of the Louvre and the Bibliothèque. He drew far into the

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night; he drew even during supper, at the frugal board of his family, surrounded by his father, his mother, and his young sister, bending over his paper utterly regardless of his health, a course of things that soon brought on gastric disorders from which he suffered cruelly. In short, he toiled incessantly, ardent and patient, obstinate, and full of self-confidence.

Assuredly he never in the world imagined that he was to become in time one of the most illustrious representatives of the French art of the nineteenth century, that he was to be the equal in renown of celebrities like Lamartine, Alfred de Musset, or Michelet whom he saw occasionally in the Luxembourg Gardens, without even daring to bow to them; but he possessed a fixed and a precise idea of what was required to be a good sculptor and the resolution to realize it. Little did he care how long it would take, how tardy success might prove, how slow fortune might be in coming; little did he care for obstacles, even for misery. He was going the right way, unhesitating, untroubled, not compromising with himself or with anybody. He possessed the irresistible will of a force.

I have had occasion to examine one of the note-books of Rodin's youth. It is quite filled with sketches after engravings from the antique, animals or human figures. The drawing is strangely compact, wilful, for the boy of sixteen or seventeen that he was then. Already, in

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its accumulation of strokes and hatchings which, during an entire period of his artistic development, render the drawing of Rodin restless and personal like a piece of writing, it exhibits an obstinate search for relief, it speaks to us like hieroglyphics, revealing the power of his grasp. His progress was rapid. At seventeen, he finished his first studies. The moment came for him to pass from the school of decorative arts to that of the Beaux-Arts and to prepare himself, like his companions, for the examinations and for the competition for the *prix de Rome*, the famous *prix de Rome* that seemed to Rodin, inexperienced student as he was, the crown of the most rigorous artistic studies.

## RODIN AND THE BEAUX-ARTS

**R**ODIN presented himself at an examination for entrance into the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. He was rejected. He presented himself a second time, but with the same result. What was the reason for it? Neither he nor his fellow-students could discover. They used to form a circle about him when he worked. They admired the keenness and precision of his glance, the already astonishing skill of his hand. They told him that he would be accepted. He failed a third time. Finally a fellow-student who was shrewder than the others gave the solution of the enigma. It requires a somewhat long explanation.

The great school is under the direction of the members of the Academy of Fine Arts. These professors correct the work of the students, set the examinations, and award the prizes. They are recruited from members of the society, are, in short, the representatives of official, or conservative, art. Official art is a product of the Revolution of 1789. Up to that time there were not two kinds of art in France. At the most, until the time of Louis XIV only one secession disported itself under the influence of Lebrun, painter to the king. Art was a unit, and its divine florescence spread from





PSYCHE

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France over all Europe. The church, the kings, and their court of great lords and cultivated ladies were the protectors and, indeed, the inspirers, of that flowering of beauty that had grown from the time of the first Capets, indeed from the time of the Merovingians, down to the end of the eighteenth century. The First Empire marked in effect the beginning of the artistic decadence of Europe and, one may say, of the world. Artists at that time divided themselves into two camps, the conservatives, with, at their head, David and his school, who pictured an art of convention and approved formulas, and the independents, who continued, although in a somewhat revolutionary and extravagant spirit, the true traditions of French art. Among those fine rebellious men of talent of the first order were Rude, Barye, and Carpeaux in sculpture, and Baron Gros, Eugène Delacroix, Courbet, and Manet in painting.

By a singular contradiction, Louis David was as baneful a theorist as he was a great painter and, above all, an excellent draftsman. That explains itself. The quality of his drawing he owed to the eighteenth century, in which he had appeared and a pupil of which he was; but he derived his esthetic doctrine from the Revolution, which made use of the same sectarian zeal to obtain the triumph of certain false ideas that it used to advance the right principles that were its glory.

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Through one, David produced works of great worth and some admirable portraits; through the other, he wrought great havoc among artists. The world was, moreover, well disposed to submit to these principles. When art restricts itself to repeating attitudes, gestures, approved receipts, without having studied or observed them in nature in her constant changes, it means decadence. If David was able to have his theories accepted, it was because the time was ripe to receive them, to be contented with them; and to say that the time was ripe is only to say that it was a degenerate time, satisfied to be relieved of the task of reflecting, of discovering for itself the laws of beauty, or, in short, of working from the foundation.

Official painter of the Revolution and the Empire, Louis David proclaimed his doctrine with the authority of a pontiff. He made a set of narrow rules which advocated a superficial imitation of the antique, a copying of the works of Greece and Rome, not in spirit, but in letter; not in that accurate knowledge of construction and of the model, which made up their supreme worth, but in their conventional attitudes and expressions.

Even from beyond the grave David continued to rule the academy of the Beaux-Arts in the name of the artificial idealism which he had proclaimed, and whoever rejected his sorry instruction saw himself without mercy shown to the door of the national schools and

## RODIN AND THE BEAUX-ARTS

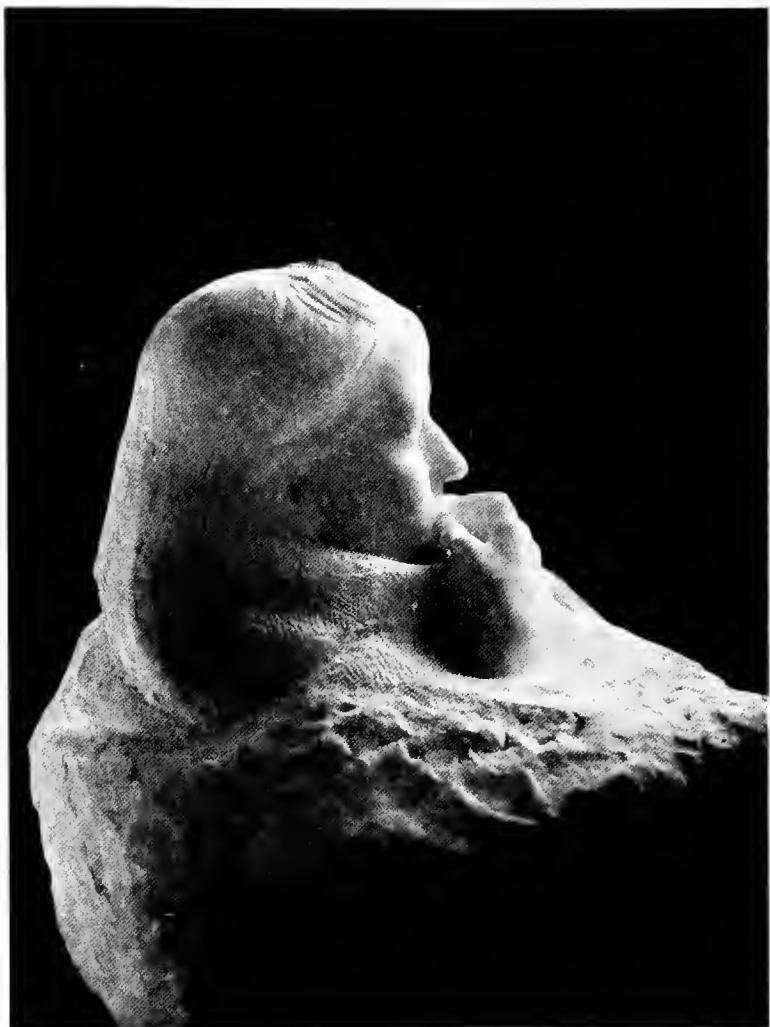
academies. They had shown the door to Rude, the author of the masterpiece of the Arc de Triomphe, "The Departure of the Volunteers of 1792." They had shown it to the unhappy Carpeaux, treated all his life as a heretic and persecuted by the official class, defenders of the so-called heroic achievements and stereotyped forms. They went to every extreme in their contest with free and determined genius. As a last resort they employed every weapon of treachery against the undisciplined great, those fallen angels of the false paradise of the Institute—weapons that later they did not scruple to use against Rodin. They accused Carpeaux of indecency, and in order to strengthen the miserable falsehood, a perverse idiot flung a can of ink on the adorable group of "The Dance," that song of the nymphs, clamorous with youth, laughter, and music.

This digression in the story of Rodin's life explains his whole life. By his manly independence, his persistent refusal to follow the dictates of the school, he naturally found himself placed at the head of those who antagonized the official class. Against an opponent of his strength and obstinacy the struggle naturally took on new energy. It recalled to mind the violence of the famous intellectual quarrels of other days—the quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and that of the Classicists and the Romanticists in 1830.

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

When Rodin presented himself at the great school, how, in his inexperience, could he foresee the war of wild beasts that rages in the thickets of art? It needed indeed a better-informed comrade to disclose the situation to him. Then his eyes were opened. He understood then that he would only be wasting his time in striving to force the bronze doors that are closed against the influences of great nature and her triumphant light, the implacable denouncer of the false in art. Perceiving it at last, he renounced the thought of entering the school. Later he gloried in the fact that he had done so. Possibly he saw the danger that he would have run of parching his spirit and chilling his eye. "Ah," his friend, the sculptor Dalou, exclaimed long after, "Rodin had the luck not to have been at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts!" Dalou himself had not had that luck, and despite beautiful gifts and love for the eighteenth century, he had not recovered from the false teaching.

Rodin, then, without knowing it, had fought his first battle, the slight skirmish to the incessant fight that was to open. After that time the name Institute, by which he understood the group of protagonists of a bad form of art, took in his speech a formidable meaning. When he says, "The Institute," he seems to call up some mythological monster, the hydra of a hundred heads, from the malignant wounds of which the brave



THE ADIEU



## RODIN AND THE BEAUX-ARTS

usually die slowly. For him the Institute has come to mean a company of able men who substitute dexterity for conscience, who, for long toil in obscurity and poverty, substitute a premature eagerness for all that it may bring—profitable relations, orders from the state, fortune, and honors. In his opinion all that ought to come slowly in order not to distract the artist from the study that alone can give him strength. To him the rewards are secondary; true happiness lies in untrammeled and passionate toil, in the exercise of growing intelligence that is determined not to be stopped on the road to discovery.

Although the struggle is less clamorous to-day, it has not ended, and it never will be ended, despite the wide fame of the master, now known throughout the world as the greatest living artist. This Rodin understands. What the contestants now seek to conquer is the public, some for the purpose of obtaining from it consideration and profit, and others an appreciation of true art. One class strives to flatter its taste, which is bad; the other seeks to inculcate a knowledge of true art in its own work. At the outset the contest is frightfully unequal, for the ignorance of the public is abysmal. Incapable of discerning true beauty, it relies only on the labels placed by the Institute on its own works and on those of its partizans. They say to a man, "This is the sort of thing that should be admired," and straightway he

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admires it, if one can apply this expression of the highest pleasure of the spirit to the vapid and dull contemplation that the public accords to the works marked for its approval. No, at best the public does not know how to admire; it does not understand the language of beauty.

At eighteen or nineteen, Rodin, being wholly without fortune, could not continue his studies without quickly finding some means of support. It was therefore necessary for him to earn his own living, and at once he bravely entered upon his work as an ornament-maker, and became a journeyman at a few francs a week. We need not regret it. This son of the people, by remaining in the ranks of the working-class, consolidated in himself the virtues of the class—their courage and industry, which are the strong qualities of the humble, and, in the aggregate, those of the whole nation. And the curiosity of a superior man for all the rewards of the exercise of his intelligence led him to cultivate himself unceasingly. His limited studies as a school-boy had not been extensive enough to surfeit him; he now brought to the study of letters a mind keenly alert, and with a joy as alive as love itself he devoted himself to a study of great minds. He read the poets and the historians; he became acquainted with the Greece of Homer and *Æschylus*, the Italy of Dante, the England of Shakspere, and the France of Jean-

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Jacques Rousseau; but up to that time he had concerned himself with only one thing—his trade. He worked as a real artisan, with no wider vision, with no thought of formidable power. He saw only his model and his clay; he thought only of these, he loved only these. Thus he had become a journeyman ornament-worker in clay. That did not prevent him from perfecting himself in sculpture. On the contrary, it aided him.

The art of ornamentation was then considered, as it is still to-day, an inferior art. People said, still say, of the sculpture of architecture, as of the frescos and mosaic work of a building, that it is only decoration. They declare it in a tone of indulgence that finds an excuse for any mediocrity.

All this is a profound mistake. Sculptured ornament springs naturally from architecture; it is the flowering of its fundamental elements. It is an inherent part of the whole, as the mass of flowers and foliage that crowns a tree is in a way the culminating point of the whole vegetable organism. Ornament demands the same qualities that the fundamental architectural structure demands, and fully as much talent and perhaps even more; because, as Rodin says, one sees in it more clearly, without distracting features, the form of genius. If it is not well done in itself, its function, which is rigorously subordinated to the whole,

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and consists in molding the contours of the structure by underlining and marking them off, is reversed. It is then only an excrescence, an arbitrary addition. Only mediocre artisans, when employed on a building or a jewel, use ornament capriciously, without proportioning and subordinating it to the mass; they weary and disgust the beholder.

Rodin and his companions did not content themselves with copying, and more or less distorting, their Greek, Roman, and Renaissance models, which were repeated to satiety in all the workshops of the world, and done over and over again so many times, out of place and out of proportion, that they had lost all significance. Their employer possessed a beautiful, but neglected, garden, where a profusion of plants ran riot. Here were models in abundance. Here, in reproducing these, the young craftsmen refreshed their vocation; they copied their ornaments from nature; they studied foliage and flowers from life. To do new work, they had only to borrow from the vegetable world its inexhaustible combinations of beauty.

Here Rodin, by his cleverness and rapidity, became without a peer among them all, and drew to himself the admiration of his fellow-workers. It was here that he met Constant Simon, his elder by many years, who was the first man to teach him to model in profile. It was one of the great epochs in his life. One may say



RODIN IN HIS STUDIO AT THE HOTEL BIRON



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that from that time the two great laws that have given his sculpture its power—the study of nature and the right method of modeling—passed into his blood, as it were. The secret that Simon imparted to him was like a philter that inflamed his soul with enthusiasm. He became intoxicated with the idea of seeing clearly and of holding his hand strictly accountable to what his eyes disclosed. And he possessed, too, both youth and an indefatigable vigor. He sketched everything he could, wherever he could. One saw him making sketches on the street, in the horse-market, jostled by the beasts, repulsed by men, yet indifferent to all difficulties in his enchantment in his discovered prize, at the *Jardin des Plantes*, where he passed hours before the cages and in the parks, studying the poses of the deer and the grace of the moving antelopes.

At that period Barye taught at the Museum. Rodin had become acquainted with the son of the celebrated sculptor. The two had discovered a corner of the basement, a sort of cave, damp and gloomy, where they installed some seats made of old boxes and delighted themselves in modeling from clay. From the Museum they borrowed a few anatomical specimens, fragments of the parts of animals, and these they carried to their cavern and pored over in their efforts to copy them. Sometimes Barye himself would come to cast his eye over their work and give them a word of advice, and

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then would go away, buried in a silent reverie. He was a man of simple habits, with the appearance of a college tutor, in his well-worn coat, but giving an impressive suggestion of great force and worth. His son and Rodin little understood him; they feared him somewhat and only half profited by his suggestions. Later the author of "The Burghers of Calais," kindled by the genius of the gloomy, severe man whom he had misunderstood, felt a deep remorse at not having rendered to Barye, while living, the homage of admiration which the master merited, and which perhaps would have been sweet to his solitary heart.

Rodin has had only rarely the chance to model animals. He has never received an order for an equestrian statue, and he has regretted it. We have from him only one small rough model of a statue of General Lynch on horseback, which was never executed, and the beautiful relief of the chariot of Apollo which forms the pedestal of the monument of Claude Lorrain at Nancy. But though he has not modeled animals, he has many times sketched them, and he has studied profoundly their anatomy and poses.

It is not so much in the powerful sketches that all his life he has continued to make with the same daily care with which a pianist practises his scales that Rodin shows the chief characteristic of his nature, as it is in accumulating these that he has been enabled to under-

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stand relationship between different forms, and to establish the unity between the forms of man and the animals, between the mountains and the vegetable world. It is by understanding this unity that he can occasionally interpret with a scientific exactness this common relationship. In modeling a centaur or the chimera or a spirit with powerful wings, the mythological creature that appears from his hands does not appear less a transcript from reality than each bust or each statue that has been vigorously wrought from the living model. There is no weakening in the points where the bust of the man or of the woman attaches itself to the body of the animal, no doubt that the beautiful, strong wings of the angels are as perfectly united to their bodies and are as necessary as their arms or legs.

When about twenty-two or twenty-three Rodin entered the atelier of Carrier-Belleuse. At that time the vogue of this charming artist was great. He well represented the spirit and workmanship of the eighteenth century in the knickknack art of the Second Empire. He was a Clodion of the boulevard. Besides the spirited busts, some of which, like those of Ernest Renan, Jules Simon, and the actress Marie Laurent, were celebrated, he sent out from his atelier, in the rue de la Tour d'Auvergne at Montmartre, hundreds of designs to be used in industrial art: mantelpieces, centerpieces for tables, vases, ornamental clocks, and

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decorative figures and groups. Rodin, then, applied himself to executing for Carrier-Belleuse a variety of statuettes and figures. There was in the task a great danger, for he saw the risk of limiting himself to a facile use of his art that was both remunerative and attractive; but his sturdy Northern temperament was able to protect him against every danger, whether of success or poverty.

Carrier had an astonishing skill, and not only worked without a model, but compelled his employees to work without one. His rough sketches were admirable, but he weakened in working them out. Rodin never trifled with his art. Before going to the atelier he always took care to study his subject in the nude and to fix it in his memory as firmly as possible. As soon as he reached his bench he transferred to the clay the result of his remembered observations. On returning to his home in the evening he consulted his model anew in order to correct his work of the day. It was for him an excellent exercise of memory. The true workman is quick to turn to advantage all the inconveniences of a situation. I have heard Rodin relate that often in the course of a quarrel with a friend or a relative he would completely forget the subject of the contention and the anger of his opponent in his absorption, from the point of view of a sculptor, in the play of the muscles and their



REPRESENTATION OF FRANCE  
IN THE MONUMENT TO CHAMPLAIN



## RODIN AND THE BEAUX-ARTS

influence on the expression of the face of the angry speaker.

Rodin remained about five years with Carrier-Belleuse. What works his active hands accomplished there in a day! One still finds them in the shops of the sellers of bronzes, in the shops of the dealers of the Marais and the Faubourg St. Antoine. Certainly hundreds of examples were brought there, to the great profit of tradesmen, but to the injury of the artist; for he drew from them only such wages as the least competent workers are to-day content with.

One may see in the gallery of Mrs. —— of New York certain little terra-cotta busts which date from that period. They represent pretty Parisian women in hats, whose wild locks veil glances full of spirit and roguishness. Creatures of youth and frivolity, they are sisters of the elegant ladies that Alfred Stevens drew with his delightful brush, and which were the charm of Paris under Napoleon III. Who could believe that they had sprung from the hands of Rodin, the austere creator of "The Burghers of Calais" and of the "Victor Hugo"?

But before becoming the audaciously personal genius that he now is, he was subjected to the most varied influences— influences that have been felt by the modern sculptors with whom he has worked and those that

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guided the old masters. He has none the less shielded himself from the world. He declares indeed, with the authority that permits the freedom, that originality signifies nothing; that that which counts is the quality of the intrinsic sculpture; that if the temperament of the artist is truly steadfast, he always finds himself after the necessary study; and finally that it is of little importance whether a statue bears the name of Praxiteles or that of one of his pupils. The essential thing is that it is well done, that it appears in a great epoch. Anonymous, it proclaims none the less to the eyes of the man of taste the signature of genius.

In order to live Rodin applied himself to the most varied occupations; thus he gained the liberty to labor at his own work for a few hours. He chipped at stone and marble for the benefit of sculpture to-day unknown, but then in vogue; he made sketches for trinkets for certain fashionable jewelers, and fashioned objects of decorative art ordered of him by manufacturers. Despite a considerable loss of time, he obtained thus a true apprenticeship in art wholly like that which in earlier days was obtained by Ghiberti, Donatello, and most of the great artists of the Renaissance, who were proud to be good artisans before they were accounted great sculptors.

Thus finally he was enabled to realize his first dream —to have an atelier of his own. His atelier! It was

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a stable, at a rental of twenty-four dollars a year, in the rue Lebrun, in the quarter of the Gobelins, near which he was born. It was a cold hovel, a cave indeed, with a well sunk in an angle of one wall that at every season exhaled its chilling breath. It did not matter. The place was sufficiently large and well lighted. The artist, young and strong, and as happy as possible in his stable, felt his talent increasing. There he accumulated a quantity of studies and works until the place was so crowded that he could scarcely turn himself about; but being too poor to have them cast, he lost the greater part of them. Every day he spent hours moistening the cloths that enveloped them, yet not without suffering frightful disasters. Sometimes the clay, through being too soft, would settle and fall asunder; sometimes it would become dry, crack, and crumble. One day, in moving, the great figure of a bacchante that had been tenderly molded for months was seized by the rough hands of the furniture-movers, and broke, crashing to the ground. What lost efforts! What destroyed beauty! Even to-day when the artist speaks of it his heart bleeds anew.

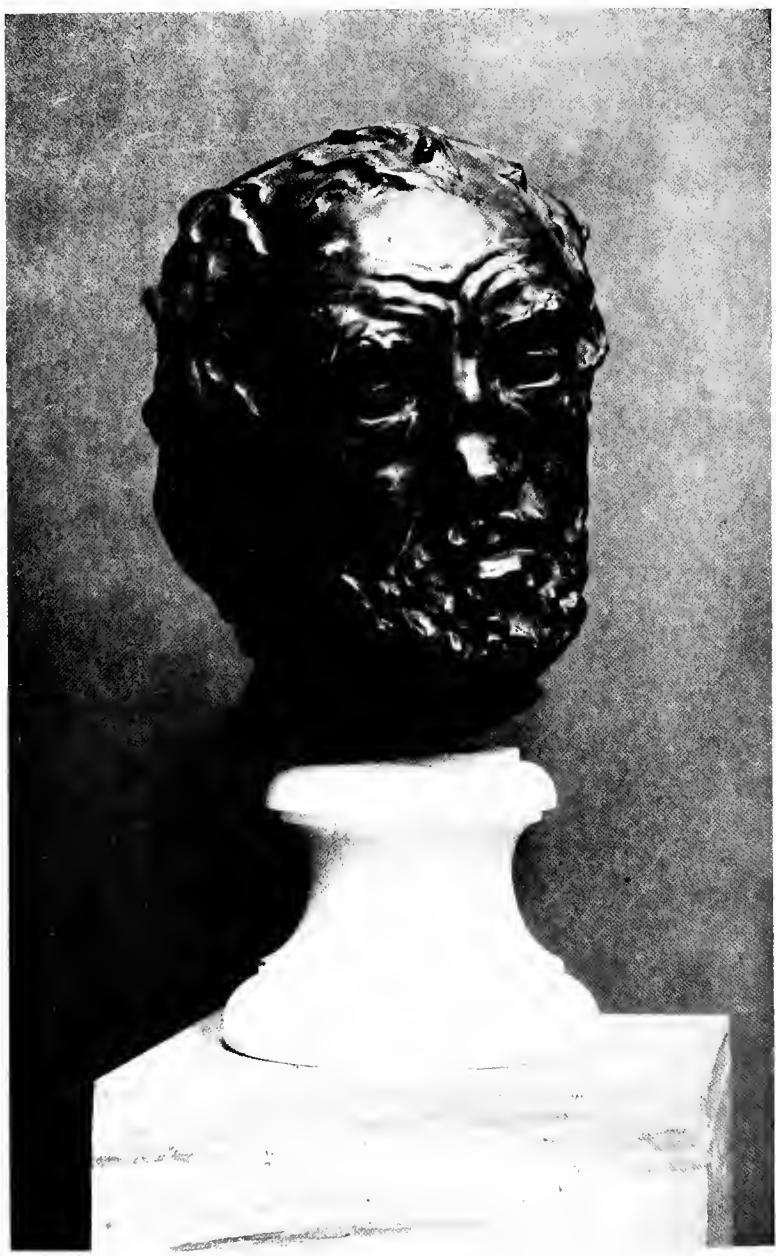
At that time he carried about the ateliers of Paris a design to which he gave the name of "The Man with the Broken Nose." Struck by the curious face of an old shepherd, flat-nosed, with every appearance of a slave that had been crushed under heel, Rodin made

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a bust of the man and strove to portray the energy and imposing simplicity that had astonished him in the antique busts and the statue of "The Knife-Grinder" that he had seen in the galleries of the Louvre. The solidity of the design, the patience shown in the composition, and the strength of the details coöperated in producing an admirable whole. The wrinkles of the forehead, the creased eyelids, the deep furrows of the face converged toward the base of the broken nose in an expression of old age and hardship, presenting an admirable head of a Thessalian shepherd. Alas! one frosty day the clay contracted, and the skull of "The Man with the Broken Nose" fell to the ground, leaving only the face. Rodin did not make over the composition. Too honest to restore the skull by approximation, he contented himself with modeling the face, to-day become famous.

He cast it in plaster, and sent it to the Salon of 1864. There it was rejected. Thus the opposition that had closed the door of the Beaux-Arts against him was renewed at his first attempt to take rank among contemporary artists. The reason was the same; it will always and invariably be the same: this sculptor of the naked truth, this fervent lover of nature, offends, shocks, and wounds the majority of the followers of formulas, the imitators of the past, the makers of smooth and pretty wares, things without conscience or significance. The artist remains alone with his deception. The day has





THE MAN WITH THE BROKEN NOSE

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not yet come when enlightened amateurs can understand in which school true talent is to be found, when they are able to renounce the moldings on nature, the theatrical postures, the irritating silliness of figures a thousand times repeated.

They will some day learn to perceive truth, observation, strength, and grace. When that day comes they will throw out of the window all the trumpery art of which they will have become tired, in order to collect that of Rude, Barye, Carpeaux, Rodin, Jules Desbois, Camille Claudel, those glories of the nineteenth century.

The year of the Salon of 1864 may serve to close the first period of Rodin's career. It is difficult, indeed impossible, to place between fixed dates the events of a life that has been an example of uniform continuity; but nevertheless it is permitted to one to say that the year 1864 marks the end of the first youth of the master. His preliminary studies, those which one may call the studies of his mere profession, were ended. He was then at the beginning of larger studies; he was about to visit Belgium, Italy, and France; he was about to come face to face with the most varied geniuses and examine their work. He was about to question them rigorously, to demand of them their technical methods. He was also about to exalt himself in the presence of these immortal thoughts, to become intoxicated with the

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desire to equal them in science and greatness. From that time on he approached them as a disciple, as a man who had already thought much and comprehended much, and who was worthy to study them and follow in their footsteps: in a word, as an artist of their own lineage.

## SOJOURN IN BELGIUM—"THE MAN WHO AWAKENS TO NATURE"—REALISM AND PLASTER CASTS

**R**ODIN worked under Carrier-Belleuse from 1865 to 1870. He remained in Paris during the Franco-German War. What influence did this event have upon him? He has said little about it. Although he has a strong attachment for his native land, he has none of the extravagant patriotism of a Rude, whose great soul was caught up in the flames of the national epopee. Rodin has too contemplative a temperament; he is too devoted to reflective work to allow himself to be long disturbed by external facts, even the gravest.

At the signing of the peace, he went to Belgium, drawn by the promise of work in decorative art. He remained there five years, staying first in Brussels, then in Antwerp.

This period of his life left with him a delightful memory. He was poor and unknown, but full of the vigor of youth, and free in how splendid a freedom! He had all his time to himself, without any of those thousand obligations that eat up the days of a celebrated man and break down his ardor.

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Life in Belgium was at that time simple, easy-going, family-like. Many small pleasures made it attractive; the cleanliness of the streets and the houses was a constant delight to the eye; the bread, the beer, the coffee were excellent and cost almost nothing. On Sundays bands of children, fair-haired, robust, healthy, dressed in aprons very white and very well starched, ran about laughing and singing; the women went to church; the men assembled in the sanded gardens of the public houses to play at ball, sipping glasses of *faro* and *lambic*. The whole scene was full of the charm of intimacy and happiness which for the artist served as a sort of frame, so to say, for the old pictures. The works of the Flemish painters are so impressive in all their power, in the splendor of their fresh coloring and their gem-like finish, that Brussels, Ghent, Bruges, Antwerp, Mechlin seem to have been built and decorated by the Brueghels, the Jan Steens, the Tenierses, whose dazzling canvases strike one almost as if they had been the plans for the construction of these queenly cities instead of being simply mirrors of them. As for nature, its grandeur and its nobility are disconcerting in such a little country.

Rodin rented a modest room in the chaussée de Bredael, in one of the quarters of the capital quite close to the Bois de la Cambre. He worked there during the whole of the day; his young wife did the housework,

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went out marketing, sewed beside him, posed for him, helped him to moisten his clay, made herself, as she said proudly, his *garçon d'atelier*. He modeled caryatids for the Palais de la Bourse at Brussels; for the Palais des Académies he made a frieze representing children and the attributes of the arts and sciences; he was charged also with the execution of decorative pieces for different municipal buildings of the city of Antwerp. Nowadays the Belgians display with pride these works, in which, without flattering them, one can recognize the touch of a future master.

Intent as he was upon his modeling work, Rodin did not abandon drawing; he added to it landscape-painting in oils. The Brabant country-side is one of the most beautiful in Europe. The Forest of Soigne, which surrounds Brussels, is full of the lofty trees of the Northern countries, splendid beeches, healthy as the bodies of athletes, reaching up into the sky like columns of light bronze, planted in regular rows, giving the impression of an immense and solemn temple. Narrow avenues, alleys, pierce the long naves; one's soul seems to glide lingeringly along these shadowy paths drawn on to the end by the far-away glimmer like stained glass. The light that falls from above through the tree-tops slips down the long green trunks, gray or silvery, bringing with it a touch of the sky. There is no exuberant vegetation, none of that undergrowth trembling with

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delicate little leaves, such as that which makes the spiritual grace of the Ile-de-France, arranged for the frolic of nymphs and fawns. This is the Gothic forest, the tree-cathedral, a fitting place for the miracles of Christianity and the devout walk of solitaries. Rodin fell in love with this forest. His grave soul, his youth, which knew nothing of frivolity, found itself here. His nature, so full of self-contained enthusiasm and the profound and slowly moved spirit of admiration, not yet capable of expressing itself, found its true element under the protection of these age-old beeches. But one corner enchanted him, a verdurous hollow filled with running water that breaks the austerity of the wood, the valley of Groenendaal. There the majestic colonnade of trunks opens out, with the condescension of giants, before the caprices of an undulating glade. It is covered with a down of grass, like an immense green cloud, always pure, always fresh, which spring and autumn embroider with delicate shoots of a multitude of flowers, like the tapestries of the Flemish masters. Little ponds shyly spread out their mirrors, full of the sky, full of reflections. An old low-built house, entirely white, speaks of security, of calm shelter, of good nourishment, in the midst of this verdurous solitude, where one hears only the song of the birds and where squirrels cross in their flight like sudden flames. The valley of Groenendaal is far enough away from Brussels to be almost

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always deserted and silent. It was the site the famous Brabançon mystic, Ruysbroeck the Admirable, chose in the fourteenth century for a monastery. At that time the Forest of Soigne sheltered no less than eleven monastic houses in its fragrant, shadowy depths. At the north of the valley the ground rises and the path leads one to the modest chapel of Notre Dame de Bonne-Odeur.

At this period Rodin certainly knew nothing of the great contemplatives of the fourteenth century or of this same Ruysbroeck whom later a glorious compatriot, Maurice Maeterlinck, kinsman by election of the hermit, was to translate and interpret; but in the peaceful glade, the *vallon vert*, as under the vaults of the great forest, the soul of the sculptor rejoined those of the old monks who perhaps still wander there at times; it shared with them the religion of this beauty which their dumb love of nature had come thither to seek.

At dawn he would start out, loaded down with his box of colors. His companion followed him, proud to carry part of the artist's paraphernalia. He was on his way to make sketches, to take notes of the landscape, to jot down his impressions; but often the day passed without his touching his brushes. It was not indifference or indolence on the part of this great worker, but simply that he had not the strength to interrupt his delightful contemplations. Time lost? In the case of

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another, perhaps. Not for him. His excursion had no immediate result; that was all: but how he would observe, how he would compare, how he would reflect! He was initiating himself in the sense of proportion, grandeur of style, and the nobility of simplicity. He was studying the laws of the light and shade distributed by the columns the true work of the architect. It was no longer school lessons that he was prosecuting here; it was the mighty exercise of personal talent, the ripening of his taste that was taking place, thanks to the technical knowledge he already possessed. The sense of the eternal laws comes only to those who can control them through long experience.

Later, when the time came for Rodin to visit the cathedrals, he was to understand better than any other this art which has sprung from the forests of France, engendered by their mysterious grandeur, once full of terrors and marvels. The benefit which he derived immediately from his acquaintance with Belgium was the experience of those intellectual joys and that happiness which await any one who is serious, loyal, reverent in the presence of the divine work that offers itself as an object of study to the assiduous.

Another besides himself had already received this teaching of nature in exactly this place. Rude, whom the Bourbons had exiled on their return to France because of his worship of Napoleon, passed several years



CARYATID

TAKEN AT MEUDON IN RODIN'S GARDEN



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in Brussels and executed there a number of works, among others the famous bas-reliefs of the Château de Tervueren, since destroyed by fire; "La Chasse de Méléagre," of which the authorities of the Belgian department of fine arts were fortunately able to take casts. On his way between Brussels and Tervueren, Rude went every day several leagues on foot, crossing the Forest of Soignes, where he, too, endeavored to forget the lessons of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, on the benches of which he had, according to his own confession, lost many years.

In addition to these works of decorative art, Rodin executed a number of busts and sketches. He even found time to make a large figure modeled after his wife, a figure draped like a Gothic statue, which he worked over lovingly. It had the same disastrous fate as that which befell the other one at Paris, and for the same reason; poverty prevented the artist from having a cast taken of his work in time: like the "Bacchante," it was completely destroyed. Despite this loss, the sculptor was not discouraged; work for him was a happiness which was begun anew each day; he at once began on another subject. This time he took for his model a young man whose acquaintance he had made and who willingly consented to pose for him.

This young man was not a model by trade, spoiled by the conventional attitudes which the Parisian sculp-

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tors impose on professionals. He was a soldier, living in barracks near Rodin's house. As soon as the sculptor saw, disengaging itself from the clothes, the graceful figure of this boy of twenty-five who was not aware of his beauty and did quite simply whatever his companion asked him, he promised himself not to abandon this work before he had carried it as far as his skill permitted him to go. His model disposed himself in simple attitudes, which were not vitiated by any pretentious forethoughts. One day he came toward him, his arms upraised, his head thrown back, with an air of youthfully voluptuous lassitude that filled the artist with enthusiasm. One would have said that he was a young hero staggering under the shock of a wound. And Rodin set himself to execute the statue of the wounded hero. But nature lends itself to infinite interpretations. The sense of an attitude that is well rendered creates of itself more comprehensive ideas. When we contemplate one who is wounded or ill, obscure impressions agitate our spirit, impelling it toward ideas higher than those of wounds and illness. It skirts the frontiers of death, the enigma of annihilation or of the world to come, and all those unformulated sentiments, which in their confused flight haunt the profound regions of the soul. Before his beautiful model Rodin experienced these emotions and transcribed them upon his sculpture. In its unblemished nudity, it bears

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the sign of no one epoch; it is the eternal man touched in his innermost sensibility by something of which he knows not the cause. Is it his soul, is it his flesh that trembles? One does not know. No knowledge comes without suffering. Rodin, aware immediately of this effect of transposition, in the delicious surprise of the artist who sometimes sees himself surpassed by his own work, christened the statue, "The Man of the Age of Bronze," that is to say, one who is passing from the unconsciousness of primitive man into the age of understanding and of love. A few years later he gave it this still happier final name, "The Man who Awakens to Nature."

He worked over it eighteen months. There is no part of this harmonious figure that has not been passionately thought out. He had to render, beneath the supple covering of the skin, those firm, fine muscles which possess the elasticity of youth and its sobriety. In giving the sense of the presence of these things, one creates the illusion of their activity. This is the secret of great sculpture and of all the arts, to evoke that which we do not see by the quality of that which we do see. "Carefully examine the Venus de Medici," Rude used to advise his pupils, "and under the polish of the skin you will see the whole muscular system appear."

Rodin did not spare either his own strength or that of his model. An implacable goddess led him on, his

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conscience. He did not content himself with rendering only the masses that his direct vision gave him. In this way he would have possessed only two dimensions, the length and width of the human body. He needed the exact relief of masses, which is the basis of *ronde-bosse*, of "cubic sculpture." He studied his profiles not only from below, but from above. He mounted a painting ladder and looked down over his model; he measured the surface of the skull, which, seen from above, has an ovoid form; he took and compared with his clay model the dimensions of the shoulders, the chest, the hips, the feet as they appeared with the floor as a background. He observed the points where the arm muscles were inserted, and those of the thighs and the legs. How, after such a rigorously minute process of noting his masses, could his work be flat? That became impossible. But the geometric labor, the taking of measurements, was not all. The next question was to reassemble the different profiles by careful transcription. There is an entire school of conscientious sculptors who believe that they can obtain reality by the simple method of making identical points correspond. They multiply the measurements taken from the model with the aid of a plumb-line and a compass; it is only a mechanical process which does not even give good practical effects. To unify the manifold surface of the human body, to endow the whole with the suppleness of



MAN AWAKENING TO NATURE



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life, with its harmonious continuity and poise, the personal judgment of the artist must unceasingly intervene. His own special taste is supremely what adjusts the elements which are waiting to be unified by him in order to take on animation and to live one beside another. It is during this last effort that the expression, summoned up by the truth of the ensemble, comes almost of itself to the fingers of the sculptor. If the preceding principles have not been scrupulously observed, it seems to refuse to come; it is the reward only of conscience joined with intelligence; it is the fruit of this indissoluble union that works in the spirit of the true artist. The true expression is that to which we give the indefinable name of poetry.

Since the creation of "The Man who Awakens to Nature," in which during two years he had eagerly sought it, this became the characteristic of Rodin's talent. He had conquered it for all time; and so while his insatiable will applies itself with no less energy to other researches, that of movement, of character, of lighting, and sometimes over-emphasizes them, the work that comes from his hand may appear strange, excessive; it will never be mediocre, never indifferent.

And now let us glance at the image of this young man, this proud, unblemished human plant. All we have just been saying is forgotten in the force of our impression. The most powerful impression, first of all, is

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indolence. It is absorbed in itself; it exhausts like a great draught of life the veins of those who respond to it. Hence the silence, the long, dumb contemplation, the sense of incertitude one experiences in the presence of its beauty. It is not to our spirit that it first addresses itself. Its voluptuousness, whencesoever come, enchants our senses; then the intellect demands an explanation, studies it, traces back the sensation to its sources through one of those rapid and manifold changes which are the law of such natural phenomena as light, sound, electricity.

“The man who awakens to nature,” said Rodin, in the presence of his statue. Indeed the body bends over, as if under the exquisite caress of the breezes of spring. The hand rests itself upon the head, flung back as if to hold in the somewhat mournful splendor of some too beautiful vision. The whole torso is gently stirred by the emotion springing up from the depths of the flesh to die out upon the surface of the imperceptibly agitated muscles. He leans lightly backward, bending like a bow and at the same time like a traveler walking toward the dawn; he is drawn on by the desire to renew this inner emotion that swells his human heart almost to the bursting-point. By this double movement reconstituting life, the action does not interrupt itself. It evokes the past and the future; the obscure

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shadows out of which this soul is endeavoring to emerge and the bright regions toward which it advances.

Auguste Rodin was at this time thirty-five years old. In the career of the artist, this admirable figure has a special significance, that of something symbolic. It marks one of the happiest phases of the sculptor's life, the period of revelation through which he had just been living during his sojourn by the forest of Groenendael. He, too, had awakened to Nature in the heart of the sacred wood; he, too, had come to know the somewhat dazzling torment of a being fully awake to the beauty of the world. This beauty he had at last penetrated; he felt it with all the strength of a ripened heart, he adored it; he made it his religion.

Such is the inner history of this statue. There is another, a history of the anecdotal sort, which is well known to-day, but which it is proper to recall in a complete biography of the master.

The adventure of "The Age of Bronze" was the first resounding battle that Rodin fought in his struggle for the cause of art. It was a victory, but only after great combats.

The plaster model appeared in the Salon of 1877. Before this proud and spirited figure a number of visitors paused, ravished by a sensation that was absolutely new. In itself there was nothing clamorous, no at-

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tempt to attract attention by extravagance of gesture or exaggerated expression—quite the contrary; the fragrance of a shy beauty, an idyllic freshness, mingled with the passionate poetry of a virile, artistic conscience, an exquisite sense of measure, a delightful elegance characteristically French, of the north of France, grave and restrained, and with a something hitherto unseen, a vigor till then unknown diffused through this adolescent flesh, irradiating it with tenderness, with a noble charm, a caressing sadness.

Immediately the rumor began to circulate, welcomed here, spurned there, by the world of professionals, amateurs, and journalists: the anatomy of the new work was too exact, its modeling too precise for it to be an interpretation of the model; it was a cast from nature, and the sculptor who gave out as the result of his own labor this mechanical copy of a human body was nothing but an impostor.

What does it matter? thought the public in its up-and-down common sense. There are plenty of fine casts from nature; so much the better for the name of Rodin if he has been particularly successful in this line.

But Rodin was indignant. This nude, so obstinately worked over, a cast! That he should have committed such a deception, he the scrupulous molder of clay! Oh, he knew well enough that most of the great modern sculptors do not burden themselves with so many scrupu-

## SOJOURN IN BELGIUM

ples and lend themselves too often to the hasty method of taking casts; he condemned it with all the force of his own probity. He knew well that in this very Salon of 1877 more than fifty pieces of sculpture about which nothing was said owed their existence to this malpractice of which he was accused and of which he would never be guilty, because he considered it the very negation of art. For of course taking casts is nothing but the reproduction of nature in its immobility. By means of it one is able to take the impression of forms, but one cannot grasp movement or expression. It is possible to take the mold of an arm, a leg, an inert body; one can take a good cast of the stiffened mask of the dead; one cannot calculate through the medium of the plaster the attitude and the modifications of form of a man walking or falling or the eloquence of a face lighted up by the reflection of the inner mind. This transcription of the whole is the exclusive privilege of the artist. He alone seizes and fixes the general impression; for it is made up not only of the immediate movement, but of that which precedes and that which follows. His eye alone registers the rapid succession, and his skill reproduces it. While the cast, like the photograph, only constitutes a unity detached from the whole, sculpture from nature reestablishes the whole itself and represents the uninterrupted vibration which is life.

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

That explains how there happen to be, on the one hand, so many hard figures, weak and cold images, turned out hastily by lazy and conscienceless sculptors, and, on the other, those works that possess a charm that is mysterious to those who know nothing of its source, who are unaware of this method of observation and labor which a supreme effort veils in the easy grace and the apparent facility that enchants us in the things of nature.

The accusation brought against Rodin became more definite. There was a veritable upheaval of opinion in the world of the Salons. He protested, with the firmness of an artist resolved to suffer no blot upon his honor. He insisted upon receiving justice. Unknown, without means of support, without fortune, he might well have waited a long time for it. He turned toward Belgium, seeking defenders in the country where he had made "The Age of Bronze"; but the academic virus did not spare him; the official sculptors remained deaf to the appeal of their confrère. For that matter, where did he come from, this ambitious stone-cutter who claimed the title of sculptor without waiting on the good pleasure of the pontiffs?

Rodin's model alone, the young soldier of Brussels, became indignant at the affront to his sculptor. He wanted to hasten to Paris and exhibit himself naked before the eye of the jury of honor which had just been

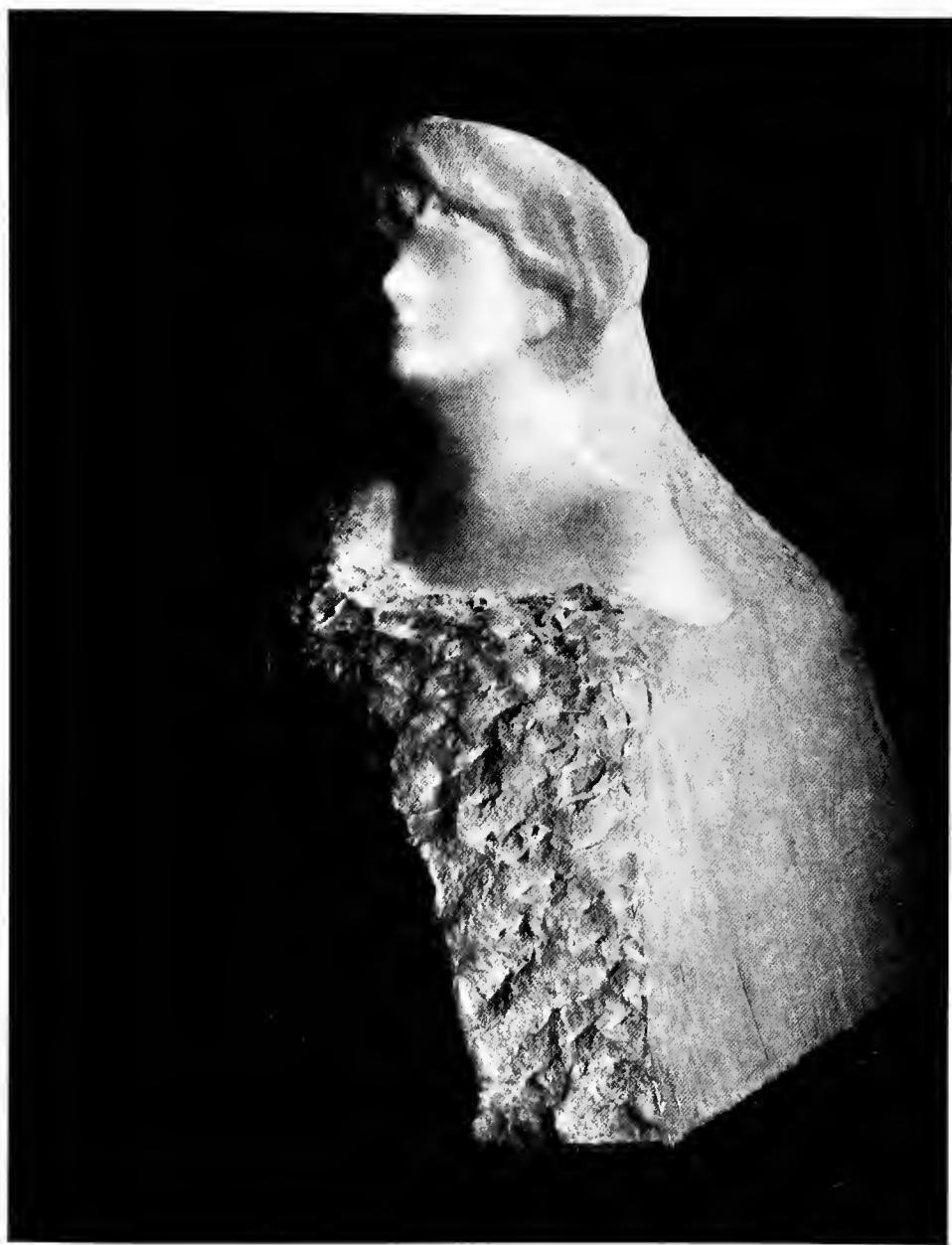
## SOJOURN IN BELGIUM

constituted and cry out to them that he had posed nearly two years for the artist who had been so unjustly attacked. But nothing is simple. He had posed, thanks to the special good will of the captain commanding the company to which he belonged, and in defiance of military regulations. To reveal this fact would be to compromise the officer, and so he had to remain silent.

Rodin had photographs and casts taken from his model and sent them to the experts. All this was costly and uncertain. It was only after months of waiting that they were examined. On the jury were several art critics, including Charles Iriarte, a learned writer and distinguished mind, and Paul de Saint-Victor, author of the "Deux-Masques," the sumptuous writer of so much brilliant prose. Alas! the most insignificant sculptor, provided he had only been sincere, could have settled Rodin's case a hundred times better. A man of his own trade, possessing the elements of justice, would have immediately decided the question according to the facts, while the critics and writers relied wholly upon personal impressions, and, to the great bitterness of the sculptor, when they delivered an opinion they did not altogether reject the accusation that he had taken casts, allowing doubt to rest upon the honesty of Rodin. He himself did not know what to do next. Chance was more favorable to him than men.

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At that time he was executing for a great decorator some ornamental motives destined for one of the buildings of the Universal Exposition of 1878. The sculptor, Alfred Boucher, a pupil of Paul Dubois, came one day on a business errand to see the decorator. In the studios he noticed Rodin at work on the model of a group of children intended for a cartouche. Boucher, who knew about the accusation that hung over him, observed him with the liveliest interest. He witnessed the rapid, skilful, amazingly dexterous execution producing under his very eye a tender efflorescence of childish flesh on the firm and perfectly constructed little bodies. *And Rodin was working without models!* Alfred Boucher was a product of the Ecole; he had taken the *grand prix de Rome*; he was ten years younger than Rodin; but he was an honest man; he hastened to relate to his master, Paul Dubois, what he had seen. The creator of the "Florentine Singer" and "Charity" in his turn wished to see things for himself. With Claude Chapu he went to the decorator's and both of them decided then and there that the hand that molded so skilfully from memory the figures of the cherubs was certainly capable, in its extraordinary knowledge of human anatomy, of having executed that of "The Age of Bronze." Thereupon they convinced their confrères and decided to write the under-secretary of state a solemn letter in which all of them, answering



BUST OF THE COUNTESS OF W—



## SOJOURN IN BELGIUM

for the good faith of Rodin, declared that he had made a beautiful statue and that he would become a great sculptor. The letter was signed by Carrier-Belleuse, Paul Dubois, Chapu, Thomas Delaplanche, Chaplin Falguière.

This tempered considerably the rancor of the artist.

It is a strange fact that for years he underrated this statue. In 1899 he gave his first great exhibition of all his work. It was to the Maison d'Art of Brussels that the honor of this project was due, and it was carried out in a style and with a good taste which no later exhibition of the master has surpassed, or even attained.

As he had charged me with the supervision of the sending off of his works, to the number of fifty, I begged him to include among them "The Age of Bronze." I hoped that the public, and especially the artists of Belgium, might be able to study the evolution of his technique through his typical works, executed at different periods of his career. Nothing could induce him to consent to it. He declared that in twenty years his modeling had undergone a complete transformation, that it had become more spacious and more supple, and that the exhibition of this statue could serve no purpose and be of good to nobody. I urged him to go and look at it again. The bronze, sent to the Salon of 1880, with the plaster figure of "St. John the Baptist in

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

Prayer," awarded, oh splendor of official miserliness! a medal of the third class, had been bought by the state a few years later and set up in a corner of the Luxembourg Gardens, an out-of-the-way corner, but one that the light shadows of the young trees made charming. The master refused. Two or three years afterward, one morning while we were talking, I led him unsuspecting toward this little grove. Thinking of something else he lifted his head, casting an indifferent glance at the solitary bronze. Surprised, he examined it, while a happy emotion lighted up his face; then he walked slowly around it. Finally he admitted quietly that he had been mistaken, that the statue seemed to him really beautiful, well constructed, and carefully sculptured. In order to comprehend it he had had to forget it, to see it again suddenly, and to judge it as if it had been the work of another hand.

After this readoption, his affection for it was restored; he had several copies cast in bronze and cut in stone, and it has become perhaps one of his most popular and most sought-after works. Museums of Europe and America, lovers of art in both hemispheres, consider it an honor to possess replicas.

It was the first of Rodin's great statues, or, rather, the first that has been preserved. Several other works of capital importance serve as landmarks in the progress of his talent. Around them are grouped fragments,

## SOJOURN IN BELGIUM

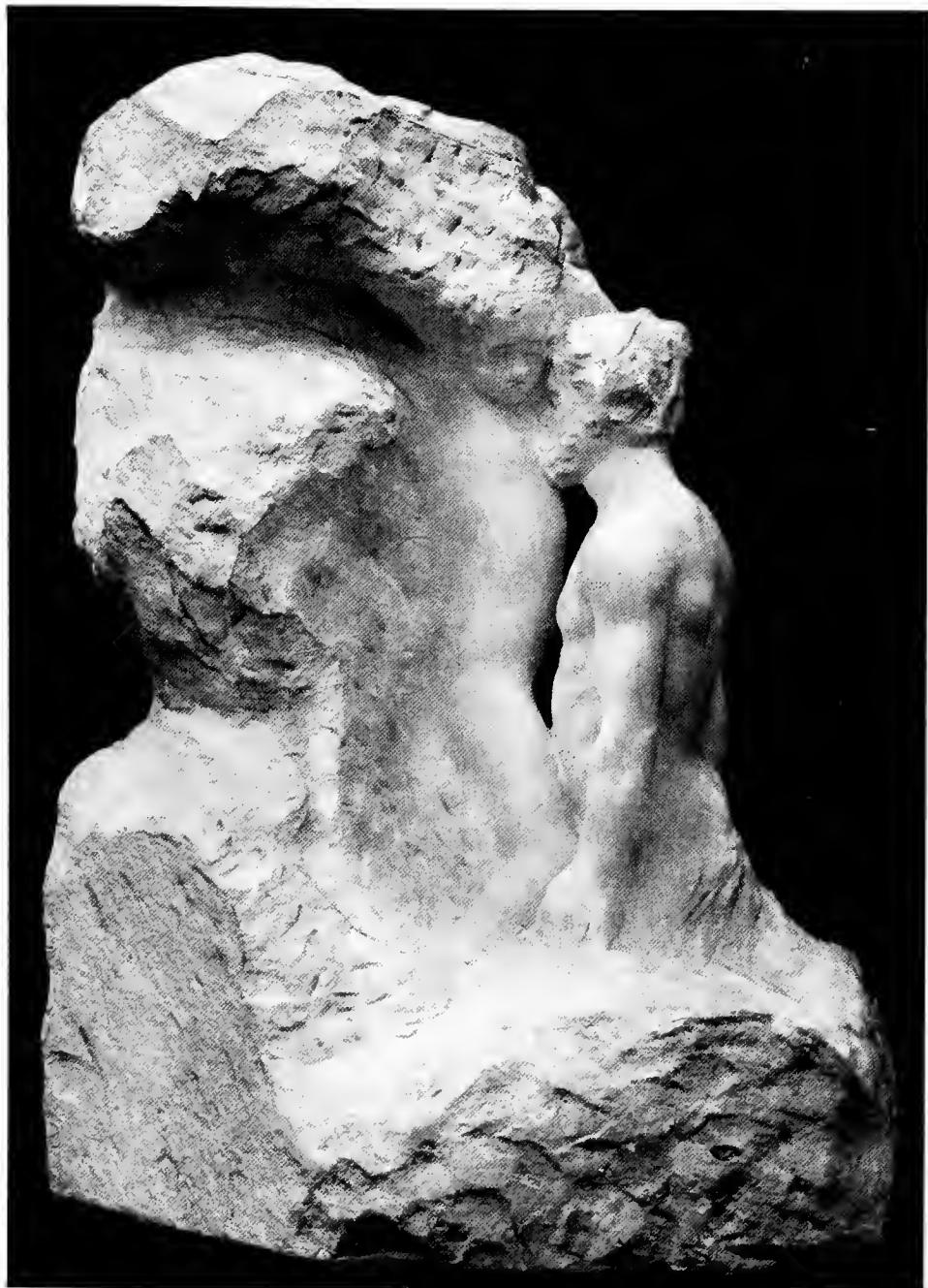
busts, innumerable delightful little compositions, all treated with the same care and equally reflecting the result of his studies; but, as ever, it is the major works that mark most visibly the points of departure and arrival of the different periods of his artistic development. These works are: "The Age of Bronze" (1877); "Saint John the Baptist" (1880); "The Gate of Hell" (1880-19—, not finished); "The Creation of Man" (1881); "The Burghers of Calais" (1889); "Victor Hugo" (1896); "Balzac" (1898); "The Seasons" (pediments of stone, 1905); "Ariadne" (in course of execution).

These works will be described and characterized, in the course of this book, at the dates of their appearance.

## FLEMISH PAINTING—JOURNEYS IN ITALY AND FRANCE

DURING his stay in Belgium, Rodin studied the Flemish painters. Free from the prejudices of the schools, unaware of the theories of the critics, sensitive to the beautiful in every form, following only his personal taste supported by the study of the masters, he ranged over the vast domain of art through regions the most dissimilar and superficially the most opposed. Of course he had his preferences; he returned unceasingly to the antique and the Gothic; but his preferences did not blind him. His admiration passed rapidly from the splendors of Greek and Roman architecture to the voluptuous graces of the seventeenth century. His love for Donatello and Michelangelo did not prevent him from appreciating Bernini.

Attracted first by the marvelous Flemish Gothic artists, Memling, Massys, the Van Eycks, he was later delighted with the homely scenes of Jan Steen, of Brueghel, of Teniers; he enjoyed them as an artist and as a simple man who knew the value of domestic joys. Then he was haunted by the sensual pomp of Jordaens and above all Rubens.



THE POET AND THE MUSE



## FLEMISH PAINTING

The triumphant brush of Rubens sculptured as much as it painted. The science of foreshortening and that of ceiling painting, his way of modeling forms in the light and by means of light—all this brought his art into the realm of sculpture; and when Rodin came to seek effects of light and shadow that were new to sculpture, he remembered the lessons of the Antwerp master. From that time on Rubens was for him a splendid subject for study and would have fortified him, had that been necessary, in the love of drawing; for beautiful drawing leads to everything, to *color*, in sculpture as well as in painting.

Flemish art was not enough to satisfy this thirst for understanding that devoured the soul of the artist now in the full swing of the fermenting force of his faculties. He wished to see Italy or at least to catch a glimpse of it. His resources were so slender indeed that his journey could not have been long. It did not matter. He would form an idea of the immensity of its treasure and confirm in himself the desire to return. He wished also to see France, as alluring to him as Greece, and whose cathedrals are perhaps not less beautiful than the Parthenon.

He started for Italy in 1875, and he accomplished his first tour of France in 1877. He set forth. He was young and strong; he made the pass of Mont Cenis on foot. He was unknown and without connections.

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

What did it matter? In the midst of these scenes so radiant with memories of history and art, did he not feel an intoxication such as the soldiers of Bonaparte alone must have experienced, catching sight of the plains of Lombardy, where they were to forget the hardships of the campaign?

For Rodin, Italy meant the antique; it meant Donatello and Michelangelo. The antique he had already to a considerable extent studied in the Louvre. Donatello and Michelangelo conquered him at the first glance—a tumultuous conquest. The severity of Donatello's style impassioned him; the rigid honesty of his realism, the desire of this younger brother of Dante to see things grandly, the equal desire to see things simply, this Gothic genius deeply moved “in the midway of this our mortal life” by pagan beauty and touched by the breath of the Renaissance, impressed the French artist and became a dominating memory. From that time on in the most beautiful of his busts, those of Jean-Paul Laurens, Puvis de Chavannes, Lord Wyndham, Lord Horace Walden, Mr. Ryan, he was to appear as a disciple of the Florentine master, not by a literal imitation of his methods, which he thoroughly grasped, but by similar qualities of observation and synthesis. Still, this was not until after he had made other studies, while Michelangelo took hold upon him immediately and completely and became an actual

## FLEMISH PAINTING

obsession that might have proved dangerous to a sculptor less severe with himself, less determined to discover his own path.

The dazzling richness of modeling, the majesty of the great figures of the prodigious Florentine, and their fullness of movement—for their immobility is charged with movement—the somber melancholy of his thought, his flaming and shadowy soul, his literary romanticism, a romanticism like that of Shakspere, overwhelmed Rodin with that formidable sense of an almost sorrowful admiration that all experience who visit the Medici tombs in the new sacristy.

He studied also the later marbles of Michelangelo, which stood at that time in the gardens of the Pitti Palace and have since been removed to the Municipal Museum of Florence.

Every one knows these powerful blocks, these vast human forms, only half disengaged from the marble, from which they seem to be endeavoring to escape in order to give birth to themselves by a rending effort that is characteristic with all the force of a symbol of the tragic genius of Buonarroti. “Unfinished works”; it is thus the catalogues designate them. Unfinished works, indeed, but why? Was it age that stilled, before the end, the hand of the giant of sculpture? Or was it not rather that he judged them too strangely beautiful in their incompleteness, that they seemed to

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

him more powerful thus, still captive to the material that bound them groaning, as it were, in their tremulous flesh?

The public pays little attention to these sublime masses because it is told that they are not *finished*. Not finished? Or infinite? That is the question. Far from weighing them down, the marble that envelops them throws about them the charm of the indeterminate and by means of this unites them with the atmosphere. The parts that are wholly disengaged enable one to divine those that remain hidden; they are veiled without being obliterated, like mountain-tops among the clouds; and this half-mystery, instead of diminishing, increases the harmony of the bodies trembling with life under their mantle of stone. In the presence of an effect so marvelous, so calculated, one cannot cease from asking if it was really death or if it was not rather the sovereign taste of the workman that arrested the chisel. While he was fashioning his statues out of the marble itself, with that fury that has passed into legend, did he not find himself, face to face with these unexpected effects which the material offered him of itself, in the midst of one of those happy situations by which the talent of the masters alone enables them to profit?

However that may be, Rodin was struck as if by a revelation. What the progress of his work had tardily disclosed to Michelangelo was soon to become for his



THE THINKER



## FLEMISH PAINTING

disciple a principle of decorative art. Instead of disengaging his figures entirely, he was to leave them half submerged in the transparent marble. This method, which has become famous to-day, seemed an unheard-of thing to those who were unfamiliar with the Florentine blocks; but Rodin has never failed to acknowledge the paternity of the sculptor of "The Thinker." Following in his steps, many artists have employed this method at random, without possessing the essential qualities that enable one to control these effects, and under their powerless chisels the enchanting device no longer possesses any meaning.

Rodin himself waited until he possessed a thorough knowledge of marble and the manner of treating it; it was a stroke of fate by which he rediscovered the phenomena of envelopment that had so transported him in the Municipal Museum. He had by that time the wisdom to guard himself from doing anything inconsistent with his material. He followed out the suggestions it gave him, and developed an infinite variety in the methods of handling it.

On his return from Italy he continued to be haunted by the unsurpassable vigor of Michelangelo's workmanship. He sought to discover what was the outstanding gift that conferred upon him this power and this mysterious empire over the spirit. Until then, with the majority of artists of the modern school, he had

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believed that the chief quality of sculpture lay in seizing the *character* of the model; but he came to see how many works concerned only with expressing character fail of real significance. Since 1830 how many romanticists have sacrificed to character without leaving any works that are lasting!

After his journey Rodin decided that the strength of Michelangelo lay undoubtedly in his *movement*. Returning to his studio, he executed a quantity of sketches and even large figures like "The Creation of Man," the title of which, although he had not been to Rome, is a souvenir of the frescos of the Sistine Chapel; he made busts like that of Bellona, after having directed his models to assume Michelangelesque poses. For all this, he did not attain to the grandeur, the soul-disturbing authority of the Florentine master.

Without becoming discouraged, he went on observing ceaselessly. Far from imposing upon his model positions thought out in advance, he left him free to wander about the studio at the pleasure of his own caprice, ready to arrest him at a word when a beautiful movement passed before his eyes. Then, six months after his return from Italy, he found that the model assumed of his own accord the very poses of which Michelangelo alone had seemed to him to possess the secret; he realized that the sublime sculptor had taken them direct from nature, from the rhythm of the human body in

## FLEMISH PAINTING

action, and that he had done nothing but seize and immortalize them.

"Michelangelo," he says, "revealed me to myself, revealed to me the truth of forms. I went to Florence to find what I possessed in Paris and elsewhere, but it is he who taught me this."

This does not prevent certain critics from asserting out of the depth of their incompetence that he has never felt the influence of this master and that he has never even given his work serious consideration. Those who know Rodin well know that, on the contrary, he never fails to give serious consideration to anything which is worth considering at all and that his power of observation is the basis of his genius. Always seeking a final method, he came back to the idea with which his earliest education had already inspired him and which his self-communings had only confirmed: that the value of sculpture lies entirely in the modeling. This is the secret of Michelangelo; it is also that of the ancients and of all the great artists of the past and of modern times. For the rest, through his spacious movements, his balancing of equal masses, the sculptor of the tombs taught him that the supreme quality consists in seeking in the modeling the living, determining line of the scheme, the supple axis of the human body.

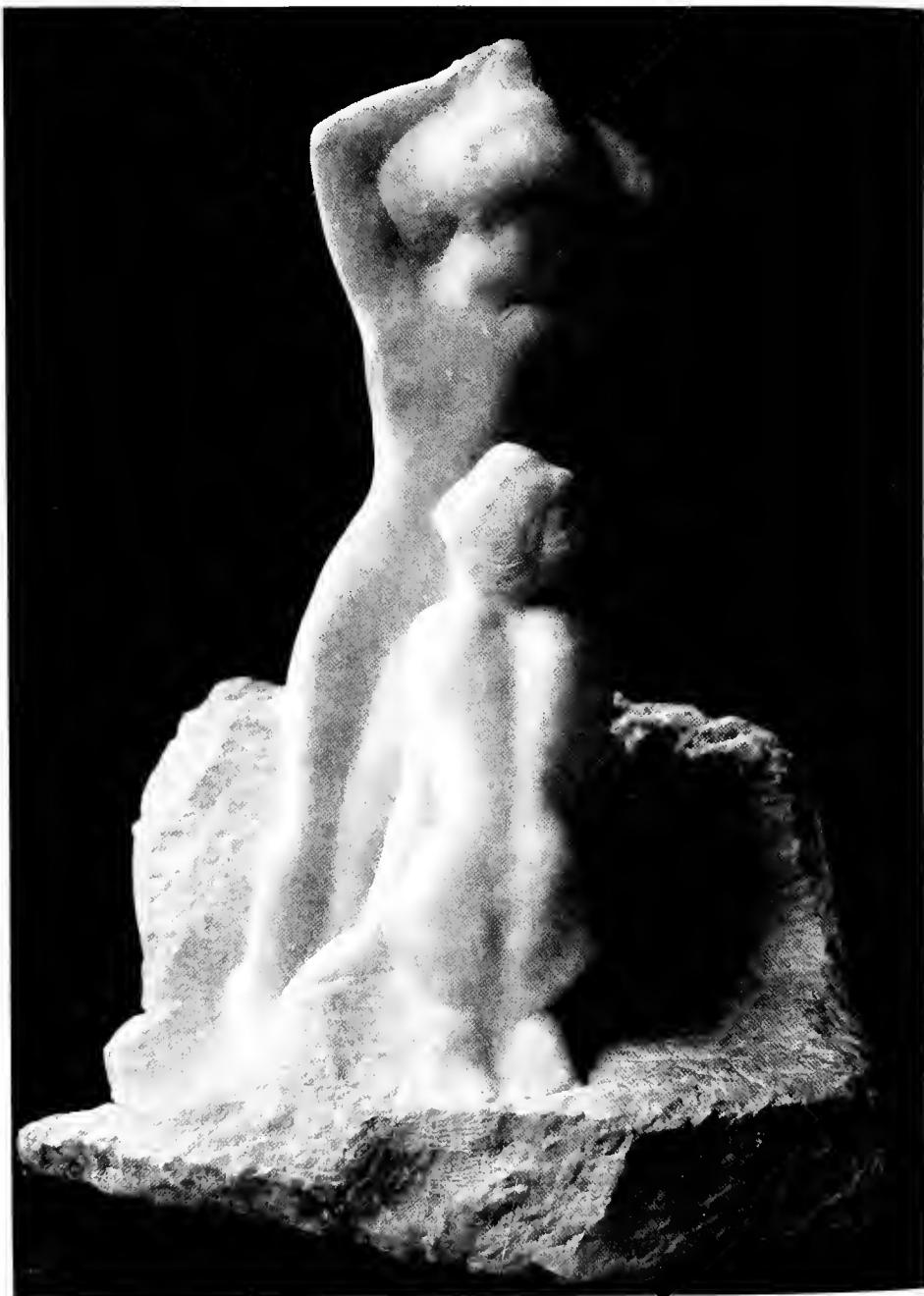
He himself held this principle of the ancients, of whom he was a disciple, as far as modeling is concerned,

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while in his composition and his handling of light he is a Gothic.

Soon after his return from Italy, Rodin executed the great study entitled "The Creation of Man." In it he exaggerated the rhythm so characteristic of the Florentine, the balancing of masses, the melancholy contraction of the body under the weight of an inexpressible inner suffering. When one examines the figure, this exaggeration certainly suggests something overworked, something forced, which Michelangelo knew how to avoid and which here creates a somewhat painful impression. But later, when Rodin conceived the idea of placing his statue at the summit of "The Gate of Hell," this strained appearance disappeared. Seen thus, a lofty shape lighted up from below, it takes on true beauty; it is in its right place; it dominates the work and, as it were, blesses it. It has the affecting gesture of Christian charity.





ADOLESCENCE

## RODIN'S NOTE-BOOK

INTRODUCTIONS BY JUDITH CLADEL

### I

## ANCIENT WORKSHOPS AND MODERN SCHOOLS

At a period in which, among the many manifestations of intellectual activity in the nations, art is placed in the background, the advent of a great artist invariably calls forth the same phenomena: a few men of taste become enthusiasts, the majority become indignant, and the public, not being possessed of sufficient esthetic education, and intolerant because of their lack of understanding, ridicule the intruder who has overthrown the accepted standards of the century. Friends and foes alike consider him a revolutionist; as a matter of fact, he is in open revolt against ignorance and general incompetence.

Little by little the great truth embodied in such a man is revealed. Comprehension, like a contagion, seems to take hold of the minds of people, and impels them to study his art at first hand. A study not only of his own significance, but of the principles which he represents, quickly reveals that the work of this innovator, this revolutionist, is, in fact, deeply allied to tradition, and, far from being a mysterious, isolated manifestation, is, on the contrary, closely linked to general artistic ideals.

Our aim is to penetrate the doctrines of this master, his method,

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his manner of working—all that which at other times would have been called his secrets.

Auguste Rodin's career has passed through the inevitable phases. He, who has been so generally discussed and attacked, is to-day the most regarded of all artists. He likes to talk of his art; for he knows that his observations have a priceless value, that of experience—the experience of sixty years of uninterrupted work—and of a conscience perhaps even more exacting to-day than at the time of his impetuous youth. He says, "My principles are the laws of experience." The combination of these principles embodies his greatest precept; namely, that of thinking and executing a thing simultaneously. We must listen to Rodin as we would listen to Michelangelo or Rembrandt if they were living. For his method may be the starting-point of an artistic renaissance in Europe, perhaps throughout the whole world. Definite signs of a decided resurrection in taste are already manifesting themselves, and it is a splendid satisfaction for the illustrious sculptor to receive such acknowledgment in his glorious old age. For, like every great genius, he has a profound love for the race from which he springs, and feels a strong instinctive confidence in it. Indeed, how should this be otherwise? In the course of centuries, has not this wonderful Celtic race on various occasions reconstructed its understanding and interpretation of beauty?

Auguste Rodin expresses himself by preference on subjects from which he can draw an actual lesson. He is no theorist; he has an eminently positive mind, one might even say a practical mind. His teachings, unlike the abstract teachings of books, can be characterized by two words, observation and deduction. His are not more or less arbitrary meditations in which personal

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imagination plays the principal part; they are rather the account of a sagacious, truthful traveler, of a soldier who relates the story of his campaigns, or of a scholar who records the result of an analysis. Reality is his only basis, and with justice to himself he can say, "I am not a rhetorician, but a man of action."

We hear him chat, it may be in his atelier about some piece of antique sculpture which has just come into his possession or about a work he has in hand, or during his rambles through his garden, which is situated in the most delightful country in the suburbs of the capital, or on a walk through the museums, or through the old quarter of Paris. For in his opinion "the streets of Paris, with their shops of old furniture, etchings, and works of art, are a veritable museum, far less tiring than official museums, and from which one imbibes just as much as one can."

**I** USE the words of the people, of the man in the street; for thoughts should be clear and easily comprehended. I desire to be understood by the great majority, and I leave scholarly words and unusual phrasing to specialists in estheticism. Moreover, what I say is very simple. It is within the grasp of ordinary intelligence. Up to now it has been of hardly any value. It is something quite new, and will remain so as long as the ideas which I stand for are not actively carried out.

If these ideas were understood and applied, the destruction of ancient works of art would cease immediately. By bad restoration we are ruining our most

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beautiful works of art, our marvelous architecture, our Gothic cathedrals, Renaissance city halls, all those old houses that transformed France into a garden of beauty of which it was impossible to grow weary, for everything was a delight to the eye and intelligence. Our workmen would have to be as capable as those of former times to restore those works of art without changing them, they would have to possess the same wonderfully trained eye and hand. But to-day we have lost that conception and execution. We live in a period of ignorance, and when we put our hand to a masterpiece, we spoil it. Restoring, in our way, is almost like jewelers replacing pearls with false diamonds, which the ignorant accept with complacency.

The Americans who buy our paintings, our antique furniture, our old engravings, our materials, pay very dearly for them. At least we think so. As a matter of fact they buy them very cheaply, for they obtain originals which can never be duplicated. We mock at the American collectors; in reality we ought to laugh at ourselves. For we permit our most precious treasures to be taken out of the country, and it is they who have the intelligence to acquire them.

My ideas, once understood and applied, would immediately revive art, all arts, not only sculpture, painting, and architecture, but also those arts which are called minor, such as decoration, tapestry, furniture,

## RODIN'S NOTE-BOOK

the designing of jewelry and medals, etc. The artisan would revert to fundamental truth, to the principles of the ancients—principles which are the eternal basis of all art, regardless of differences of race and temperament.

### CONSTRUCTION AND MODELING

In the first place, art is only a close study of nature. Without that we can have no salvation and no artists. Those who pretend that they can improve on the living model, that glorious creation of which we know so little, of which we in our ignorance barely grasp the admirable proportions, are insignificant persons, and they will never produce anything but mediocre work.

We must strive to understand nature not only with our heart, but above all with our intellect. He who is impressionable, but not intelligent, is incapable of expressing his emotion. The world is full of men who worship the beauty of women; but how many can make beautiful portraits or beautiful busts of the woman they adore? Intelligence alone, after lengthy research, has discovered the general principles without which there can be no real art.

In sculpture the first of these principles is that of construction. Construction is the first problem that faces an artist studying his model, whether that model be a human being, animal, tree, or flower. The ques-

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

tion arises regarding the model as a whole, and regarding it in its separate parts. All form that is to be reproduced ought to be reproduced in its true dimensions, in its complete volume. And what is this volume?

—It is the space that an object occupies in the atmosphere. The essential basis of art is to determine that exact space; this is the alpha and omega, this is the general law. To model these volumes in depth is to model in the round, while modeling on the surface is bas-relief. In a reproduction of nature such as a work of art attempts, sculpture in the round approaches reality more closely than does bas-relief.

To-day we are constantly working in bas-relief, and that is why our products are so cold and meager. Sculpture in the round alone produces the qualities of life. For instance, to make a bust does not consist in executing the different surfaces and their details one after another, successively making the forehead, the cheeks, the chin, and then the eyes, nose, and mouth. On the contrary, from the first sitting the whole mass must be conceived and constructed in its varying circumferences; that is to say, in each of its profiles.

A head may appear ovoid, or like a sphere in its variations. If we slowly encircle this sphere, we shall see it in its successive profiles. As it presents itself, each profile differs from the one preceding. It is this suc-

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cession of profiles that must be reproduced, and that is the means of establishing the true volume of a head.

Each profile is actually the outer evidence of the interior mass; each is the perceptible surface of a deep section, like the slices of a melon, so that if one is faithful to the accuracy of these profiles, the reality of the model, instead of being a superficial reproduction, seems to emanate from within. The solidity of the whole, the accuracy of plan, and the veritable life of a work of art, proceed therefrom.

The same method applies to details which must all be modeled in conformity with the whole. Deference to plan necessitates accuracy of modeling. The one is derived from the other. The first engenders the second.

These are the main principles of construction and modeling—principles to which we owe the force and charm of works of art. They are the key not only to the handicraft of sculpture, but to all the handicrafts of art. For that which is true of a bust applies equally to the human form, to a tree, to a flower, or to an ornament.

This is neither mysterious nor hard to understand. It is thoroughly commonplace, very prosaic. Others may say that art is emotion, inspiration. Those are only phrases, tales with which to amuse the ignorant.   
- Sculpture is quite simply the art of depression and protuberance. There is no getting away from that.

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

Without a doubt the sensibility of an artist and his particular temperament play a part in the creation of a work of art, but the essential thing is to command that science which can be acquired only by work and daily experience. The essential thing is to respect the law, and the characteristic of that fruitful law is to be the same for all things.

Moreover, such was the method employed by the ancients, the method which we ourselves employed till the end of the eighteenth century, and by which the spirit of the Gothic genius and that of the Renaissance and of the periods of culture and elegance of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were transmitted to us. Only in our day have we completely lost that technic.

These rules do not constitute a system peculiar to myself. They are general principles which govern the world of art, just as other immutable laws govern the celestial world. They are mathematical principles which I found again because my work inevitably led me to follow in the footsteps of the great masters, my ancestors.

### THE TRADITIONAL LAWS OF ANCIENT ART

In days of old, precise laws were handed down from generation to generation, from master to student, in all the workshops of the workers in art—sculptors, painters,

## RODIN'S NOTE-BOOK

decorators, cabinet-makers, jewelers. But at that time workshops existed where one actually taught, where the master worked in view of the pupil. In our day by what have we replaced that marvelously productive school, the workshop? By academies in which one learns nothing, because one sets out from such a contrary point of view.

These principles of art were first pointed out to me not by a celebrated sculptor, or by an authorized teacher, but by a comrade in the workshop, a humble artisan, a little plasterer from the neighborhood of Blois called Constant Simon. We worked together at a decorator's. I was quite at the beginning of my career, earning six francs a day. Our models were leaves and flowers, which we picked in the garden. I was carving a capital when Constant Simon said to me: "You don't go about that correctly. You make all your leaves flatwise. Turn them, on the contrary, with the point facing you. Execute them in depth and not in relief. Always work in that manner, so that a surface will never seem other than the termination of a mass. Only thus can you achieve success in sculpture."

I understood at once. Since then I have discovered many other things, but that rule has remained my absolute basis. Constant Simon was only an obscure workman, but he possessed the principles and a little of the genius of the great ornamentists who worked at the

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châteaux of the Loire. On the St. Michel fountain in Paris there are very beautifully carved decorations, rich and at the same time graceful, which were made by the hand of this little modeler, who knew far more than all the professors of esthetics.

Such was the purpose the workshops of old served. The apprentice passed successively through all the stages and became acquainted with all the secrets of his handicraft. He began by sweeping the studio, and that first taught him care and patience, which are the essential virtues of a workman. He posed, he served as model for his comrades. The master in turn worked before him among his students. He heard his companions discuss their art, he benefited by the discoveries that they communicated to one another. He found himself faced every day by those unforeseen difficulties which go to make an artist till the moment when the artist is sufficiently capable to master his difficulties. Alternately, they were both teacher and companion, and they conveyed to one another the science of the ancients.

What have we to-day in place of those splendid institutions which developed character and intelligence simultaneously? Schools at which the students think only of obtaining a prize, not attained by close study, but by flattering the professors. The professors themselves, without any deep attachment for their acad-

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mies, come hurriedly, overburdened by official duties and all sorts of work; weighed down by perfunctory obligations, they correct the students' papers hastily, and hurriedly return to their regular occupation.

As to the students, twenty or thirty work from a single model, which is some distance from them and around which they can hardly turn. They ignore all those inevitable laws which are learned in the course of work, and which escape the attention of an artist working alone. They attend courses, or read books on esthetics written in technical language with obscure, abstract terms, lacking all connection with concrete reality—books in which the same mistakes are repeated because frequently they are copied from one another. What sort of students can develop under such disastrous conditions? If one among them is seriously desirous of learning, he breaks loose from his destructive surroundings, is obliged to lose several years first in ridding himself of a poor method, and then in searching for a method which formerly one had mastered on leaving the atelier.

That is the method that I preach to-day as emphatically as I can, calling attention to the numerous benefits and advantages of taking up a variety of handicrafts. Aside from sculpture and drawing, I have worked at all sorts of things—ornamentation, ceramics, jewelry. I have learned my lesson from matter itself and have

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adapted myself accordingly. Only in being faithful to this principle can one understand and know how to work. I am an artisan.

Will my experience be of benefit to others? I hope so. At all events, we have a bit to relearn. It will take years of patience and application to rise from the abyss of ignorance into which we have fallen. However, I believe in a renaissance. A number of our artists have already seen the light—the light of intellectual truth. Acts of barbarism against masterpieces cannot be committed any more without arousing the indignation of cultivated people. That in itself is an inestimable gain, for those works of art are the relics of our traditions, and if we have the strength to become an artistic people again, to reincarnate an era of beauty, then those are the works of art that will serve as our models, expressions of a national conscience that will be the mile-stones on our path.

Judged by his work, Auguste Rodin is the most modern of artists; judged by his life and character, he is unquestionably a man of bygone days. As a sculptor, he is such as were Phidias, Praxiteles, and the master architects of the Middle Ages; that is to say, he is of all times. One single idea guides his thoughts, one single aim arouses his energies—art, art through the study of nature.

It is by the concentration of his unusual mind on a single purpose that he attains his remarkable understanding of man, physi-



HEAD OF MINERVA



## RODIN'S NOTE-BOOK

cal and moral, his contemporary, and of the spirit of our age. In the lifelike features of his statues he inscribes the history of the day. They seem to live, and the potency of their life enters into us and dominates us. For the moment we are only a silent spring, merely reflecting their authority.

Through this secret of genius, his statues and groups have an individual charm. They have taken their place in the history of sculpture. There is the charm of the antique, the charm of the Gothic, and the charm of Michelangelo. There is also the charm of Rodin.

## II

### SCATTERED THOUGHTS ON FLOWERS

In Rodin's statues we find his conception of eternal man—man as he really is. They are molded on modern thought, with all its variations. One might suppose that these beautiful beings of marble and bronze had been named by the characteristic poets of the century, Victor Hugo, Musset, Baudelaire.

Beginning with the Renaissance and particularly during the seventeenth century, the royal courts were the great salons in which the taste of the day was developed. Necessity made courtiers of the artists, for to obtain orders, they had to win the good-will of the sovereigns, the great lords, and the financiers.

Art then lost its collective character, the artist his independence and strength. There was no longer the united effort of artists, inspired by love of beauty, to create great masterpieces such as cathedrals, city halls, and castles. The artist wasted his abilities in fragmentary bits, his time in worldly duties. To-day it is even worse. Keeping house, traveling, receiving, exhibiting in a hundred different places, living in great style, carrying on his life-work—all these crowd out the first, and formerly the essential, object of the artist, his work. It is these that lower art to the last degree of decadence.

Rodin has kept aloof from this manner of living, has avoided these innumerable occasions for wasting time, or, rather, has never allowed them to take possession of him. Modest, unpretentious, traveling little or within a limited radius, the unremitting study of the divine model and of the masterpiece, man, forms his

## SCATTERED THOUGHTS ON FLOWERS

whole ambition, while it is also the source of endless delight to him. "Admiration," he says, "is a joy daily kindled afresh," and again, "I talk out of the fullness of life; it belongs to me in a sense larger than that of ownership."

In his villa at Meudon, in the midst of his collections of antiques, he pursues this study incessantly. He who is admitted to the modest garden of the great master first beholds with delight a Greek marble in an arbor. At the turn of a path there is the torso of a goddess resting on an antique column; in a niche in the wall, a Roman bust. Beneath the high arch of the peristyle of the studio, the architecture of which blends into the surrounding background as in the paintings of Claude Lorrain, there is a magnificent torso. Finally dominating the garden and the valley it overlooks, standing on a knoll and projected against the clear sky, there is an isolated façade from a castle of the seventeenth century, its delicate balustrades and casements outlined against the blue sky as in the decorative paintings of Paul Veronese.

These ruins are the remains of the Château d'Issy, the work of Mansart. Rodin saved them at the moment when their destruction at the hands of ignorant workmen was imminent, and at great expense reconstructed them near his residence. These fragments, this noble portico, seem as though placed by chance, but the keen observer quickly perceives the correctness of taste that has determined their disposition. Each fragment forms part of an ensemble with the trees, the grass, the light, and the shadows, and to change any of these in the slightest degree would sacrifice some of its beauty. Sculpture at its finest is architecture, and architecture is perhaps the greatest art, because it collaborates directly with nature. Architecture lives through the life of things, and every hour of the day lends it a new expression.

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Innumerable reflections were aroused in the mind of the master Rodin when he essayed to place his treasures: the effect of the changing light on the object, the balancing of values, the relation of proper proportions, the appearance of the object in full light. All these he examined and studied, and he searched into the depths of the language of forms, to him as clear and as mysterious as beautiful music. This remarkable gift for determining the value of the object in its setting—a gift the secret of which is beyond the knowledge of the ignorant—has brought forth that peculiar poetic charm which permeates this little garden in a suburb of Paris, a refuge of persecuted beauty. Here the master confers with the artists of Greece and France of other days. These are his Elysian Fields.

In Paris, where he is daily and where he works every afternoon, he lives in an exquisite, but ruinous, mansion of the eighteenth century, situated in a rustic, neglected park. There he finds his delight in the study of flowers and applies himself to it with his intense, never-dormant desire for understanding. His antique pottery is filled with anemones, carnations, and tulips. During his frugal meals they are before him, and his reverent love of them arouses his desire to understand them as completely as he does human beings. He analyzes and searches out their details without becoming insensible to the beauty of the whole. He jots down his discoveries, his words picture them; like La Rochefoucauld, he searches into their character; but watching over their life admiringly and tenderly until they wither, he does not dissect them, does not destroy them.

Is not the flower the queen of ornaments, the inspiration of all races and ages, the very soul of artistic decoration? Have not the hands of genius contrived to employ the most durable as well





THE BATH

## SCATTERED THOUGHTS ON FLOWERS

as the most fragile material to express this delicate beauty in Greek and Gothic capitals, in the stone lacework of cathedrals, the fabrics of gold and silk, brocades, tapestries, wrought iron-work, old bindings? Is the splendor of stained-glass windows aught else than the splendor of a mass of beautiful flowers?

“Were this thoroughly understood,” says Rodin, “industrial art would be entirely revolutionized—industrial art, that barbarous term, an art which concerns itself with commerce and profit.

“The young artists of to-day understand nothing; they copy to satiety the classic ornaments and designs, and reproduce them in so cold a manner that they lose all meaning. The ancients obtained their designs from nature. They found their models in the garden, even in the vegetable garden. They drew their inspiration from its source. The cabbage-leaf, the oak-leaf, the clover, the thistle, and the brier are the motives of the Gothic capital. It is not photographic truth, but living truth, that we must seek in art.”

. Rodin writes his observations. He notes them down at the moment as they occur to him in all their freshness, and in this form they will be given here. At first glance, the reader may be surprised at their apparently fragmentary form. They may seem devoid of general continuity, but when one comprehends the great master’s method, one sees that a bond much firmer than that of the mere word binds them together. They seem disjointed because here, as in his sculpture, the artist accepts only the essential, and rejects all superfluous detail. In reality they have the continuity of life, which is felt, but not seen, and which renders arbitrary transition unnecessary. This is the prerogative of genius, while all else is within the grasp of any one. His

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authority strikes us dumb; it puts to rout mere commonplace cleverness.

**I**HAVE had primroses put in this little flower-pot. They are a bit crowded, and their poor little stems are prisoners; they are no longer in their garden.

I look at them on my table like a vivisector. I admire their beautiful leaves, round-headed, vigorous, like peasants. They point toward me, and between them is the flower. The one on this side is resigned, and as beautiful as a caryatid. In profile it seems to hold up the leaf against which it leans and which gives it shade.

These little flowers are not beautiful, nor are they radiant. They live peaceably, gently contented in their misery; and yet they offer something to one who is ill, as I am to-day, and cause him to write to ward off weariness.

I always have flowers in the morning, and make no distinction between them and my models.

Many flowers together are like women with heads bowed down.

There is no longer the sap of life in flowers in a vase. The lacework of the flower of the elder-tree—Venice. The anemone is only an eye, cruelly melancholy. It is the eye of a woman who has been badly used.

These anemones are flowers that have stayed up too

## SCATTERED THOUGHTS ON FLOWERS

late at night; flowers that are resplendent, with their colors as though spread over them superficially and wiped away. Even in the spring, in the hour of anticipation, they are already in the fullness of enjoyment.

Like the flower of seduction, the anemones slowly change their form outlined in various ways, always restrained, however, and inclosed within their sphere. Their petals have not a common destiny: some curl up, others are like a becoming collar, still others seem to be running away. The delicate droop of the petals, standing out in relief, is like the eyelid of a child.

Although old, that one does not shed its petals. Poor little flower with bent head, you are not ridiculous; you are pensive now that you are dying. You suffer from the cruelty of the stem which holds you back.

Flowers give their lives to us; they should be placed in Persian vases. Near them, gold and silver seem of no value.

Ah, dear friends, we must love you if we would have you speak to us! We must watch you or you fall from the vase, despairing, your leaves withered.

The flowers and the vase harmonize by contrast.

In this bouquet there are some with flexible stems which seem to leap up gracefully. The flower, surrounded by its frail, straight leaves, is as if suspended from the ledge of a wrought-iron balcony.

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Ah, the adorable heart of Adonis is incased within these flowers!

The hyacinth is like a balustrade placed upside down. A bed of hyacinths resembles a mass of balusters. Thus that great invention of the Renaissance, the balustrade, allows us to gain through it a glimpse of nature. This ray of art, the flower, this delicate inspiration, unknowingly requires the intelligence of man to develop its possibilities.

Superb is this little rose-like flower among its spreading leaves. It is like an assumption.

The double narcissus is a bird's-nest viewed from above. Strange flowers, like so many throats! What a frail marvel they are!

These three little narcissi group themselves like a cluster of electric lights.

The dignity of nature impresses us on every hand. It is greatly apparent in flowers; and yet so small are they that some look on them merely as the decoration at a banquet.

I will cast a narcissus in bronze; it shall serve as my seal.

A maiden on a lake, that is the narcissus.

Little red marguerite, not yet open, sister to the strawberry, huddled in the shade which caresses you.

The full-blown marguerite seems to play at *pigeon-vole*.

## SCATTERED THOUGHTS ON FLOWERS

It has rained for four hours; this is the hour when flowers quench their thirst.

A marguerite in profile, a serpent's head with open jaws, stretching out its tongues! Petals, white, like a little collar.

Seen in full face, its yellow-tinted heart is a little sun; its long petals are like fingers playing the piano.

These white flowers are gulls with wings outstretched. They fly one after the other; this one, in adoration, has its petals thrown backward, like wings.

Whoever understands life loves flowers and their innocent caresses.

These marguerites seem to retreat like a spider that finds itself discovered in the road. Their buds stretch out their serpent-heads at the end of long stems, divided by intercepting leaves and entangling knots. Does not love travel in a similar path rather than straight as an arrow?

There is so much regularity in these dark-green leaves, extending at fixed intervals to right and left, and in the eternal dryness of the bouquet, that it calls to mind a Persian miniature.

No man has a heart pure enough to interpret the freshness of flowers. We cannot give expression to this freshness; it is beyond us.

When it sheds its petals, the flower seems to disrobe

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

and go to sleep on the earth. This is its last act of grace, showing its submission to God.

What spirit possesses these flowers that die in silence! We should listen to them and give thanks.

This red and black ranunculus proclaims the carnival; it is the carnival itself. The carnival is the very emblem of flowers. Like them it, also, wears masks and costumes. It wears their colors, bright yellow, red—an imitation of the flowers of the sun.

Delightful carnival! Delightful interpretation of flowers! For a long time in my youth I undervalued them. I am happy now to see them under another aspect, as the splendor of Rome and the lavish intelligence of a bygone time.

Some one gave me tulips. They fascinate me variously. How great an artist is chance, knowing the last secret by which to win us!

These yellow tulips, dipped in blood! What a treat to see true colors—reds, blues, greens, the art of stained glass!

One is quite taken aback before these flowers, in which nature has expressed more than one can comprehend. It imparts that great mystery which is beyond us and signifies the presence of God.

How magnificent the flower becomes as its youth passes!

Even the flowers have their setting sun.

## SCATTERED THOUGHTS ON FLOWERS

My bouquet is always the same, yet I never cease to look at it.

A whirlwind, a very cyclone, this tulip has perished in the storm. Like the wife of Lot, it is possessed of fear.

This one is open, all aflame like a burning bush. That one, all disheveled, comes toward me. Full of ardor, it springs up, its petals strong and expanding, like a mouth curling forward.

The violence of passion in flowers is pronounced. Ah, the softness of love is found only in women!

Great artists, curb your curiosity, neglect the pleasures which offer themselves to you, so that you may better understand the secrets of God.

### III

## PORTRAITS OF WOMEN

Rodin's busts of women are perhaps the most charming part of his work. But to say this is almost a sacrilege, an affront to the grace of the small groups that, in this giant's work, swarm about the superior figures. But we need not search too far into this or yield to the pedantic mania for classifying to death. Let us rather look at them without transforming the joy of admiration into the labor of cataloguing, and give ourselves up wholly to the pleasure of seeing and understanding.

Yes, these portraits of women are the graceful aspect of this work of power. They are the achievements of a force which knows its own strength, and here relaxes in caresses. If some among them disturb the spirit, most of them shed upon us a calm enjoyment, the delightful security that one breathes among all-powerful beings that wish to be gracious. They allay the sense of unrest aroused in us by those dramas in marble and bronze which a powerful intellect has conceived—that mind from which sprang “The Burghers of Calais,” the two monuments to Victor Hugo, “The Tower of Labor,” that imagination, glowing like a forge, which produced “The Gate of Hell,” the Sarmiento monument, the statue of Balzac.

Here Rodin's art extends to the utmost confines of grace. He has contrived to discover the most delicate secrets of nature. He models the petals of the lips just as nature curls the frail substance of the rose-leaf. By imperceptible gradations he attaches



THE BROKEN LILY



## PORTRAITS OF WOMEN

the delicate membranes of the eyelids to the angle of the temples just as nature in springtime attaches the leaves to the rough bark of trees.

Great thinkers never cease to be moved by the charm of weakness. The “eternal feminine” is just that, the power of grace over the manly soul. The strongest feel this attraction most, are most possessed with the desire of expressing it. I am thinking of Homer, Leonardo da Vinci, Shakspere, Balzac, Wagner, and Rodin in saying this. They have created a feminine world, the figures of which, lovingly copied from living models, become models in turn. They haunt thousands of souls, fashion them in their image. In her complicated ways, Nature avails herself of the artist to modify the human type.

We have some terra-cotta figures of Rodin, modeled when he was between twenty-five and thirty, while working at the manufactory at Sèvres, in the studio of Carrier-Belleuse, that accomplished sculptor. They are charming little busts, with the perfume of the eighteenth century breathing from them, treated a little in the manner of Carpeaux, with the velvety shadow of their black eyes on their sparkling faces. One of them, now in a private gallery in New York, has a hat on its head, coquettish, tender, innocently provocative; it is full of Parisian allurement because it is characteristically French. One can find its kindred among certain Renaissance figures, and even among the mischievous faces of Gothic angels. With all this there is that ephemeral prettiness which is called “fashion,” that caprice of styles which does for the adornment of cities what the flowers of the field do for the country.

If Rodin had pursued his path in this direction, he would have been a portrait-sculptor of great taste, and would doubtless have

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attained celebrity sooner, but a celebrity which is not glory. At that time he was chiefly concerned with copying the features of his models with all the sensitiveness of his admiration; he did not yet attempt those large effects of light and shade which were to become the object of his whole career, and are so still. He has made the religion of progress his own by reflective study. Progress is for him the chief condition of happiness. Present-day philosophies commonly put it in doubt; but if happiness exists, it is surely in the soul of the artist. But it is recognized with difficulty because it is called by an equivocal name, the ideal.

Let us look at the "Portrait of the Artist's Wife." Here, in this noble effigy, this severe image with its lowered eyelids, the artist passes beyond the promise of his first period. The face, rather wide at the cheek-bones, lengthens toward the chin, where the sorrowful mouth reigns. It expresses melancholy, gravity, dignity, Christian charity. It is rather masculine, and seems less youthful than the original was at the time. It is as if the artist had sought to bring out the character by conscientious modeling, without any softening; all the features are underlined, as on a face that has attained a ripe age. He had not yet discovered the art of softening his surfaces, of blending them in a general tonality, and of obtaining that softness, that flesh quality, with all the shades of youth, which touches the heart in his more recent busts.

Even then he did know, however, how to gather under the boldly molded superciliary arch of the brows the diffused shadows which, in the future, were to lend mystery and distance to most of his portraits. This mask is all that remains of a standing figure dressed in the manner of Gothic figures. Rodin was then living in Brussels, still young, poor, and unknown, but happy. He

## PORTRAITS OF WOMEN

tasted the perfect happiness of long days of absorbing labor, of that enthusiasm for work which nothing disturbs. To-day he sometimes yearns for those years free from the never-ceasing bustle of a celebrated man's existence, a giant assailed by a thousand pin-pricks. Yet his poverty was excessive, for the beautiful statue, modeled during successive months with much love, fell to pieces. For want of money, the sculptor had not been able to have it cast.

Among his women's busts, one of the most famous and one which remains among the most beautiful is that of Madame Morla Vicuña. It dates back about twenty-five years, but it is resplendent in eternal youth. Since then Rodin has added to his knowledge and experience. He has made personal discoveries in the plastic art. He has become the master of color in sculpture. Nevertheless, this portrait, as it stands, remains an adorable masterpiece. Who that has looked at its softly gleaming marble in the Luxembourg has not been overcome by a long dream of tenderness, of uneasy curiosity? Who has not hoped to make this woman speak, to press her heart in order to draw from her a confession of her desires, the secret of her happiness and her melancholy?

It is more than a bust, it is woman herself. Because the beautiful shoulder slips tremulously from the heavy mouth, which lies against the smooth, polished flesh; because this shoulder rises again toward the head, slightly bent and inclined, as if to draw toward it some loved one; because the neck swells like that of a dove, and the head is stretched forward to offer a kiss, we seem to catch a glimpse of the whole body and its delicate curves. It is a beautiful bust. I should like to see it alone in a room hung with dim tapestries, drawing forth its charm like a long sigh,

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which nothing should disturb. This masterpiece demands the distinction of solitude.

How beautifully modeled the head is in its firm delicacy! The framework of the narrow skull appears under the texture of hair fastened over it like a rich handkerchief. We can almost see the impatient hand, trembling with feeling, that has twisted the firm knot under the nape of the neck. Everywhere, level with the temples, at the bridge of the nose,—the aquiline nose marking the Spaniard of race,—this bony framework stands out. The face catches a feverish character from it, tortured by the longing for intimate expression, and reveals a being with whom happiness borders closely upon sorrow. The nostrils tremble as if to the perfume of the flowers pressed voluptuously against the warm bosom. The mouth is at once mobile and firm, and all the curves of the features converge toward it—toward the kiss which causes it to swell softly.

The light steals gently into every line and fold of the face. It borders the eyelids, glides under the brows, outlines the bridge of the nose and the nostrils, emphasizes the opposed arches of the lips. It spreads like a spring, separating into a thousand streams. It is a network, like the tracery of the woman's nerves made visible. It is as if the sculptor and the light had begun a dialogue—a dialogue kept up with endless graces and coquettices. He contradicts it, refutes it; it escapes, returns. He gathers it up, as if to force it into the sinuous folds of the figure. Again it flees, and then, summoned back, it returns cautiously, and at last bathes the statue in generous caresses.

This bust will live. In its enigmatic grace it will become more and more the expression of the woman who loves, just as "La Gioconda" ("Mona Lisa") is the expression of the woman who is



PORTRAIT OF MADAME MORLA VICUNHA



## PORTRAITS OF WOMEN

loved. The one is all instinct, the other all spirit. The one offers herself; the other promises herself. The one is tenderness directed toward the past; the other smiles toward the future.

In the same gallery of the Luxembourg, there is that other famous head called "La Pensée." What a contrast! It is strangely bound within a block of marble, placed like a living head on a block. And yet it tells only of the slightly resigned calm of meditation, or of melancholy, without bitterness, of long autumn days, with their diffused brilliancy. The outlines are firm, regular, placid, of remarkable moderation in their distinction. The head leans forward, because thought is a weighty matter. The brow and the eyes are the dominant features. On them the sculptor has focused all the light not only in the high lights, but in the still surface as well.

The caprice of the artist has covered this head with a light peasant-cap. This hides the details of the hair, and concentrates the glance on the face. "Caprice" expresses the idea badly, for it is taste and the will of the artist that have directed all. These dreamy features express the practical mysticism of women, the effort of intelligent devotion. It makes one think of St. Geneviève, of Jeanne d'Arc, of the overwhelming courage of a weak being carried beyond and out of herself by a great purpose.

"La Pensée" has the striking character that almost all the busts of Rodin assume in the future, and which they owe on the one hand to their intense lifelikeness, and on the other to the atmosphere with which the sculptor surrounds them. There are no hard-and-fast limits which separate them from the circumambient air; on the contrary, they are bathed in it. The "blacks," which give a hard, dry look when used to excess, are handled marvelously. The women's busts, especially, almost start up before us

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

with this slightly fantastic look of life increased tenfold, with the charm of phantoms of marble, monumental, and yet as light as beautiful mists.

These effects of light and shadow perhaps harmonize best with the softness and delicacy of the feminine flesh. They convey to us naturally the mystery of an inner life more secret, more intimate than that of man.

Even with works that are similar, the public does not recognize their common origin. It sees the result of an extraordinary amount of observation and intelligence, yet it does not reflect more than a child. For the public the sculptor, whoever he may be, is a creature of instinct, with a trained eye and hand, but without mind and culture. He is a sculptor, that is all. A common proverb strengthens the belief in this lasting folly. It may be told, then, that the master with whom we are here dealing studies his models not only as a sculptor, but as a writer studies; that often his hand drops the chisel for the pencil, in order to set down his observation more exactly, to search even further into nature.

Perhaps the public will at last grasp the fact that the true artist, under penalty of ceasing to be one, must, above all, expend an amount of attention of which other men are incapable, and that it is by this power of attention that the strength of intelligence is measured. For example, Rodin is facing his model, a young woman stretched out in an attitude of repose. He writes, and in his style we find all the power of the great draftsman. He marks the outlines, he specifies the details, slowly, patiently, with pertinacity. He never confuses the impression, always so ready to elude one—the impression, the divine reward of the artist.

## PORTRAITS OF WOMEN

THE dazzling splendor revealed to the artist by the model that divests herself of her clothes has the effect of the sun piercing the clouds. Venus, Eve, these are feeble terms to express the beauty of women.

The head leans to one side, the torso to the other, both inclining indolently, gracefully. This body has been glorified. The contours flow, descend, repose, like immortality personified. The breasts follow the same curve. The flowing lines are all in the same direction. Unchangeable, heaving above the half-opened screen of the dress, the breath scarcely lifts them. It does not stir or agitate them.

The beautiful human monument is balanced in repose. It is unassailable. It is the gradation of contours.

I do not draw them, but I see them in place, and my spirit is content, accustoms itself to the impression. In memory I still make drawings of this model, and these moving lines are repetitions, done over again a hundred times; for I repeat the drawing constantly, like a caress.

This torso resigns itself, like an Ariadne whose contours melt away in the evening, in the dark. But the lightning of day has flashed there. It is there always. It is now the pale gleam of flesh. My mind, carried along, takes this form as its model.

The hand, the arm, support the head, the sidelong

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

glance from which is so full of sweetness. One might call it a "Mona Lisa" reposing. This head feels the need of resting on the supporting hand, a delicate support like the handle of a vase. Like an urn about to pour out its water, its thought, it inclines.

Lying back on the cushion, the head is in high relief. The features are placed according to their due regard, which is the very soul of balance. It has made the eyes symmetrical; the eyebrows straight; the nose, where beauty and symmetry meet, expressive of a wholesome conformity.

When a woman is very beautiful, she has the head of a lion. From the lion is copied that splendid regularity of the eyes, which the oval of the face accentuates. The tawny mane is also lion-like in its regularity and majesty, without any other expression.

Arches are formed without effort of all the parts of the eye. The hinges of the eyes open and close. The open mouth keeps back neither the thoughts nor the words that have been spoken. There is no need for her to speak. Her age, her thoughts, all is a confession here—the features, the arch of the frank, noble mouth, as well as the form of the nose and the sensitive nostrils.

And this infantile glance under a woman's eyelid! Our soul demands that, by an agreement with the heavens, the feminine glance should be celestial.

How I bathe in the calm beauty of these eyes, with





"LA PENSÉE"

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their regular drawing! How they themselves declare their tranquil joy! Sometimes eyes like these seem to be inhabited by spirits. They close, and I see the horizontal lashes, the lower lid, which just rests against the upper. I see as a whole the soft oval of these long eyes, the double circle of the lids themselves, and the circle beneath, so modest now, but which one calls the circle of love.

The eyeball in moving shows the clear pupil, and all about it press the circles of the delicate lids. The soul finds a refuge in these secret hiding-places, and throws out its circles of attraction like a lasso. This sensuous soul is the soul of beautiful portraits.

The cheeks curve against the socket of the eye; the double arch of the brows prolongs itself behind them. The surface of the cheeks extends to the extremity of the nose, forms a double depression by the sinking of the cheek, which grows hollow toward the convex lip, and surrounds the mouth and the two lips. These facial lines and surfaces all stop at the chin, toward which all the curves converge.

The facial expressions proceed from, spread, and move in another circle. They all disappear in the cheeks, just as do the movements of the mouth. One curve passes down from the ear to the mouth; a small curve draws back the mouth and also the nose a little. A circle passes under the nose, the chin, to the cheek-

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bones; a deep curve, which starts back to the cheek-bone, cuts in a small hollow to the eyebrow. The features are distinct; but when they move, they merge into one another. The smile passes over the face by a circle defining the mouth. The edge of the mouth is defined by a mezzotint at the point of union.

The loose hair surrounds the cheek, and the head seems like a golden fleece on a distaff. It hangs like loosened garlands. How beautifully these garlands of hair are arranged, with the profile in a three-quarter view, standing out against the fine, tawny hair! The impressive harmony between the flesh and the hair! They seem altogether in accord; they lend each other languor and charm; they are united and separated at the same time. These drooping clusters of chestnut-blond hair are a frame. One might call them long flowers hanging from the edge of a vase.

The neck no longer holds erect the head, which moves in ecstasy. It drowns itself in the wavy flow of hair, which becomes undone at the moment. This inundation of hair, so to speak, what a generalized expression of opulence it is! Before its beauty I feel imbued with love. I am seized with enthusiasm, aflame with it. This gold, this dull copper, is like a field of grain, a field of corn, where the sheaves are of gold bound together. These sheaves, slightly disordered in their

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lengthening curves, turning in all directions, imitate the tone of subdued flesh tints.

In this veil, transparent and colored like a dead leaf, the ear is hidden in shadow, where the hair flies back at random in strands, twists about, and returns.

O head, beautiful ornament, drooping against the edge of the couch like a lovely motive in architecture at the edge of a console, you express the prolonged weakness of a lovely languor! The shoulder extends its beautiful curve before the face, resting on its side; the line rises, passes near the nose, descends, and shows the red line of the mouth, just as the bees continually enter and go out of the opening of the hive. The face turns, but the eye returns to me, passes by me, and again gazes upon me.

In it there is the softness of the dog's eye, a spirit which becomes motionless when the tyranny of passion has disappeared. When passion is in control, she sucks like a vampire that delicate flesh, which is the model of calm, the exquisite remainder of calm.

This crown of beauty is not made for one woman alone, but for all women. They do not know it, and yet all in turn attain this beauty, as a fruit ripens. This calm is more potent in them than in the most beautiful statues. They are unaware of it, and the men who are near them are unaware of it also. They

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have not been taught to admire. They have not been educated in the science of admiration.

When, in the galleries of the Louvre, magnificent rooms where are gathered the collections of antiques, day enters through the windows and lightly touches these beautiful sculptures which are the adornment of great palaces, do they understand any better? Do they realize the collaboration between the sculptor and the light?



HOTEL BIRON. VIEW FROM THE GARDEN



## IV

### AN ARTIST'S DAY

The residence of Rodin, the Hôtel Biron, is situated at the extreme end of the rue de Varenne, in the Faubourg St. Germain. The long straight street is lined on both sides with old mansions that lend a distinctive nobility to this district of Paris. The street is solemn, the quiet austere. Only rarely a carriage rumbles by. Like the tide of a river, the air sweeps down this street from the Boulevard des Invalides, which at its other end opens upon the Esplanade des Invalides, like a great lake.

Now and then one catches glimpses of the spacious courts, the steps, the peristyles, and the ornate, but at the same time simple, pediments. Most of these mansions were, and many of them still are, inhabited by families associated with the history of France.

The northern façade of the Hôtel Biron and the courtyard through which one enters are hidden behind a high convent wall, for in the nineteenth century the old residence of the Duc de Biron was transformed into a religious school of the Sacred Heart. There the daughters of the aristocracy were educated. In consequence of the law of 1904 relating to the religious orders, the mansion was vacated, and taken possession of by the state, which rented it in apartments. Rodin, ever in search of old buildings, in which alone he can think and work in comfort, soon became the main tenant.

To ring the bell one must reach high. With difficulty one

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turns the handle of the door, which swings slowly. It is a portal made for coaches to pass through. Under its monumental arch one seems as insignificant as an insect. To the right of the court is the old chapel of the religious community. Its somber character stands out against the neighboring secular buildings. The cold style of Charles X, in which it is built, forms a strange contrast to the charming structure of Jacques Gabriel, the celebrated artist who in the eighteenth century endowed Paris with many works of art, among others this pavilion of the rue de Varenne, the Hôtel Biron. Nevertheless, had it not been for Rodin, this building would have been torn down.

It is a vast mansion, extremely simple, and built on the lines of an elongated square. Its great charm is due wholly to its correct proportions and to the grace and variety of its beautiful, tall windows, some straight, others rounded, and surmounted by an inconspicuous ornament, the signature of the artist. All of them are enlivened by little squares of glass, which are to a window what the facets are to a diamond.

The spacious vestibule is paved with black and white marble, its ceiling supported by six strong columns. A charming stone staircase rises here. All is in the style of Louis XV, a style that is dignified when it is not delightfully elegant and coquettish.

The house was to be torn down, and sold as junk; but Rodin was on guard. Ever since he had learned that this masterpiece was condemned his heart had bled, and for the first and only time in the course of his long existence an outside interest took him from his work. He wrote letters, took legal steps, called to his assistance artists, people of culture, and men in politics. M. Clémenceau, then president of the cabinet; M. Briand, who succeeded him; M. Gabriel Hanotaux, one of his great friends; M.

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Dujardin-Beaumetz, under-secretary of state of fine arts, all listened to his indefatigable pleading. Finally his plea was heard, and the Hôtel Biron was classified as a historical monument, henceforth inviolate. Then the speculators had to abandon their idea of filling the park with hideous modern structures, and of disfiguring in six months this unique Quartier des Invalides, to construct which the architects had given years of work and all their intelligence.

Rodin's admirers soon conceived the idea of converting the Hôtel Biron into a museum for the master's works, which they pledged themselves to defend with a tenacity equal to that which Rodin had just displayed.

I knock at the door of the studio and rapidly pass through two large rooms containing no furniture, only busts of bronze and groups of marble. When I enter the study, Rodin is not here; I glance about. All the details of this room are familiar to me, but they always seem new, because everything is in harmony here, with a harmony which varies according to the day and the hour.

It is a morning in spring. The bright light sheds its rays on the various antiquities that the master has assembled here: Empire chairs, with faded velvet coverings; a Louis XIV arm-chair of gilded wood and cherry-colored silk, in which one might fancy Molière seating himself to chat with Rodin, who, ever ready as he is with a bit of raillery, would surely not have failed in repartee.

On a round table there is a Persian material, and some Japanese vases filled with tulips and anemones. On the mantelpiece are bronzes from the far East and a statuette of porcelain in marvelous blues that Rodin calls his "Chinese Virgin." On the walls, close together like the stones in a mosaic, are many of the master's

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water-colors. Their well-chosen tones harmonize with and intensify those of the flowers, the fabrics, and the ceramics of bygone days.

Scattered pedestals support huge bronze busts, which call to mind warriors of the Middle Ages, and some unfinished pieces. They consist of small groups that, under the eye of the master, seem to grow out of the white marble, and in the golden sunlight look as soft as snow.

On this table, where Rodin takes his meals and writes, is a Greek marble, a little torso without arms or legs; I know it well, for he showed it to me while murmuring words of admiration. This is his latest passion.

I enter the garden, where he is enjoying a moment of rest, for he has been working a long while. Owing to his habits as a good workman, he rises at five every morning.

I pass through one of the big doors which open upon the park. The beautiful view always captivates me anew. The light, the air, the expanse of sky, the magnificent groups of trees, this rustic solitude in the heart of Paris, take one by surprise, inspire and elevate the spirit. Rodin is here, smiling and in good humor.

We are on the terrace that overlooks the expanse of green and forms a sort of slanting pedestal for the pavilion. Below stretches a broad alley, almost an avenue, overgrown with a rich carpet of grass and moss, which loses itself in the distant wood. Fruit-trees, growing wild, form impenetrable screens on both sides of this alley.

The grandeur of this park is largely due to the age of the trees. Stepping to the edge of the balustrade, I can see toward the right the dome of the Invalides, standing alone, outlined against the sky, like a burgrave on guard under a helmet of gold.



RODIN PHOTOGRAPHED IN THE COURT OF THE HOTEL BIRON



## AN ARTIST'S DAY

The northern façade of the pavilion has a severe character. It is the façade which visitors and passers-by see, and for this an elegant simplicity suffices. But this other side, bathed in the midday sun, is meant for friends. All the delicate splendor that the architect conceived is expressed in these stones. This sculptured pediment, this balcony with its console of flowers, and the graceful windows, with their semicircular transoms, are models of elegance. The Hôtel Biron is not large, but it is imposing. The blockheads who inhabited it during the last century, blind to its beauty, deaf to its appeal, demolished and sold the wrought-iron balustrades of the windows, balconies, and staircases, but they were not able, thank Heaven! to destroy its innate beauty.

"Let us go to work," said Rodin. I go back to the statues; Rodin begins to draw. In a little while he will model. During his hasty luncheon he has the little Greek torso placed before him, and he makes notes all the while.

True genius is as changeable as nature. It finds as many ways of expressing its ideals as it finds subjects. But what always remains the same is the desire to be sincere. Yet the artist, with the best of intentions, is often the victim of his own sincerity. Rodin is no exception to this rule, for even he has had his portraits rejected. "There is no resemblance!" people declare, while, on the contrary, the resemblance is too true. With his keen insight he penetrates too far beyond the mere flesh of the model. People are frightened at seeing their hidden personality brought to the light of day, are taken aback at being compelled to know themselves. They consider the sculptor indiscreet and dangerous.

If, in his portraits of men, he pries to their very souls, if he reveals without pity those of his own sex, his equals, his companions in life's struggle, in his portraits of women he is discreet

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

and respectful. With delicacy he unfolds their delicate mystery. He does not say anything which is not true, but frequently he does not express the whole truth. Genius is ever in quiet complicity with womanhood, and leaves it in that half-obscenity which is its greatest power.

In the bust before us of Mrs. X——, one wonders what he refrained from expressing. Surely neither the unusual beauty of the woman nor her air as of an archduchess.

I remember the day when I saw this bust for the first time. It was in the Salon, placed at the head of a high staircase. The marble was brilliant. Something regal and also lovable attracted those who came toward it. Resplendent in beauty, the shoulders emerge from the folds of a wrap with the proud grace of one who is to the manor born. The small, well-shaped head, supported by the plump, though delicate, neck, is half turned to the slightly raised left shoulder. The hair is drawn up high to form a crown, throwing forward some light strands that shed their soft shadows over the forehead, like a thatching of moss. The beautiful eyebrows, too, lend mystery to the glance of the eyes, so full of sweetness and understanding. The small ear is partly hidden under the waves of the well-groomed hair. The lines of delicate symmetry which run from the chin to the ear, and from the ear to the shoulder, and the coronet of hair, give the bust its distinguished look of race.

Here we see, too, the firmness of beautiful flesh, hardened by exercise, radiating that spirit of joyous life that springs from a thoroughly healthy body, as we feel it in some of the Tanagra figurines. The quiet reserve which stamps the refined Anglo-Saxon is revealed, but not overaccentuated. The nose is straight

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and slightly raised at the tip, the mouth frank and regular. Those same changing shadows which beautify flowers, when the sun strikes them through the leaves of a tree, play over this countenance, and bathe it in a variety of delicate tones from the eyes to the chin. But beneath this placid beauty there is a restless soul eager to act, to express its goodness. The chin and the throat retain their look of youth, even of something childlike for those whom she loves; but the thoughtful brow is slightly wrinkled, as if from the intelligent search for happiness.

This bust, almost Greek in its simplicity, is one of the most purely beautiful that has come from Rodin's hands.

When we note the facility with which these works are produced, seemingly a natural growth, like vintage and harvest; when we contemplate these fruits of knowledge, we are too apt to overlook the laborious efforts involved, and to forget that a life has been given, drop by drop, to achieve this result in small steps of progress. Even when we know all this, we often prefer to give the credit to external causes, which appeal more strongly to our superficial minds, rather than to that endless patience that is, and always will be, the secret of genius.

I watched Rodin model the head of Hanako, the Japanese actress. He rapidly modeled the whole in the rough, as he does all his busts. His keen eye and his experienced thumb enable him to establish the exact dimensions at the first sitting. Then the detailed work of modeling begins. The sculptor is not satisfied to mold the mass in its apparent outlines only. With absolute accuracy he slices off some clay, cuts off the head of the bust, and lays it upside down on a cushion. He then makes his model lie on a couch.

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

Bent like a vivisector over his subject, he studies the structure of the skull seen from above, the jaws viewed from below, and the lines which join the head to the throat, and the nape of the neck to the spine. Then he chisels the features with the point of a pen-knife, bringing out the recesses of the eyelids, the nostrils, the curves of the mouth. Yet for forty years Rodin was accused of not knowing how to "finish"!

With great joy he said one day, "I achieved a thing to-day which I had not previously attained so perfectly—the commissure of the lips."

In making a bust Rodin takes numerous clay impressions, according to the rate of progress. In this way he can revert to the impression of the previous day, if the last pose was not good, or if, in the language of the trade, "he has overworked his material." Thus one may see five, six, or even eight similar heads in his studio, each with a different expression.

Hanako did not pose like other people. Her features were contracted in an expression of cold, terrible rage. She had the look of a tiger, an expression thoroughly foreign to our Occidental countenances. With the force of will which the Japanese display in the face of death, Hanako was enabled to hold this look for hours.

Little by little, under the sculptor's fingers, the mask of clay reflected all this. It cried out revenge without mercy, the thirst for blood. A baffling contrast this—the spirit of a wild beast appearing on the human countenance.

I have one of these studies before me now. It has been cast in a composition of colored glass, and the vivid flesh coloring lends reality to the work. This mask is not disfigured by rage. The bloodless head, with its fixed stare, lies on a white cushion, and no



PORTRAIT OF MRS. X—



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one escapes its disquieting influence. Some people shudder when they see it. "One might think it the head of a dead person," they say.

Whenever I enter the spacious room I am irresistibly drawn toward it. My feelings are different every time, but always there is a feeling of uneasiness. I cannot say that it resembles death; on the contrary, it is so lifelike that it is almost supernatural. One might call it a condemned person, a being so terrified by the approach of death that all the blood has rushed to the heart. It is a spirit frozen with fear, the eyes looking toward the unknown, the large nostrils scenting death. The bulging forehead, the high, Mongolian cheek-bones, and the flat nose make the face still more singular. All the lines of the face run toward the mouth, with its remarkable expression. Obstinate, although conquered, it will draw its last breath without a cry.

Meanwhile life seems to throb in every cell. This head, so like a being that has been put to death, has the soft, pliant flesh of a ripe fruit.

At night I return to look at it by the light of a candle. It looks entirely different. The shadows vary as I move the candle, and the features grow mobile. How gentle and touching it seems now! It is no longer bloodthirsty and savage; that exotic expression which repelled me has quite disappeared. These features, expressing the innermost self under a stress of emotions, reveal a poor creature that has loved and suffered. It is a pitiable face that has been molded by life. I have seen that same sad, tired expression of anguish in one whose whole strength is gone, but who still makes an effort to understand misfortune in order to strive against it. I have seen it on my mother's face when one of us was ill.

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### A MORNING IN THE GARDEN

**I**T is still night; the dawn is just breaking. I open my window to let the refreshing air drive away my drowsiness. From the end of the garden, in the underbrush, and now all about me, I hear much lively chirping. It tells of the blessing of love, of springtime.

It is almost day. The blackbird has ended his scene of love; no one was about when he sang his song of spring and harmony. The flowers listened, and blossomed at the call of this unseen Orpheus. The air is laden with misty melodies. These songs do not disturb the silence; they are part of it. Later we shall still hear the happy call of birds, but no longer these songs of love that proclaim the eternal reign of our mother earth.

Now is the time for sighs of happiness; the flowers consecrate themselves to the beautifying of Demeter, goddess of the under-world. Orpheus searches for Eurydice; he calls her, and his notes break the harmonious silence.

I must bathe my brows in the vague mist, in the fragrance of the earth, in the light of the dawning day. Spacious room, I leave you. I shall return to you to work, for here only have I known complete silence.

I hurry into the garden, where I find inspiring fresh-

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ness. I had looked forward to it; my whole body was awaiting it. A sprouting twig proclaims the fullness of life. I am freed from the memory of yesterday, born anew for all the seasons to come. In the *palais* thoughts are more subdued and modest, content to be bounded by the splendid proportions of the apartments —proportions that are correct, but nothing more.

The flight of time is marked by the song of the blackbird, and, as in Mozart's music, one cannot quite define whence its charm springs. It is everywhere, to the right, to the left. That voice seems to pierce through the gaps and hollows of the wood, for now one hears it as an echo, now as a solo, at the farthest end of the wood.

My flight of steps is my place for reflection, my *salle de pas perdus*.<sup>1</sup> At the foot of the steps the verdant carpet, sown with little stars of green, stretches out. It might be an old Arabian material or a rich marble. Bits of earth are to be seen in delicate gray patches. The shadow of night still enshrouds the garden in a cloudy veil. In the distance, outlined against the horizon, are the bleak walls of houses, like huge stones. About me stretches that enormous Babylon, that Paris where my tired nerves relax, where the substance of my life is woven, where my heart has found appreciation and no reproach, and where my mind, imbued with the true

<sup>1</sup> *Salle de pas perdus* is the name given to the large hall of the Gare St. Lazare, Paris.

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

knowledge of life, has taught my soul the gracious lesson of submission.

This broad, beautiful lane is like a Corot, and recalls his nymphs. The bare trees look like limbs. A bright carpet of turf moistens their roots. Now a rabbit runs by. In the distance the carriages rumble like artillery. This is a fitting haunt for fauns, their rustic arbor. The trees serve as a roof, their green shoots melting into the sky. The freshness of new life is everywhere, and little exclamations of admiration spring from every creature.

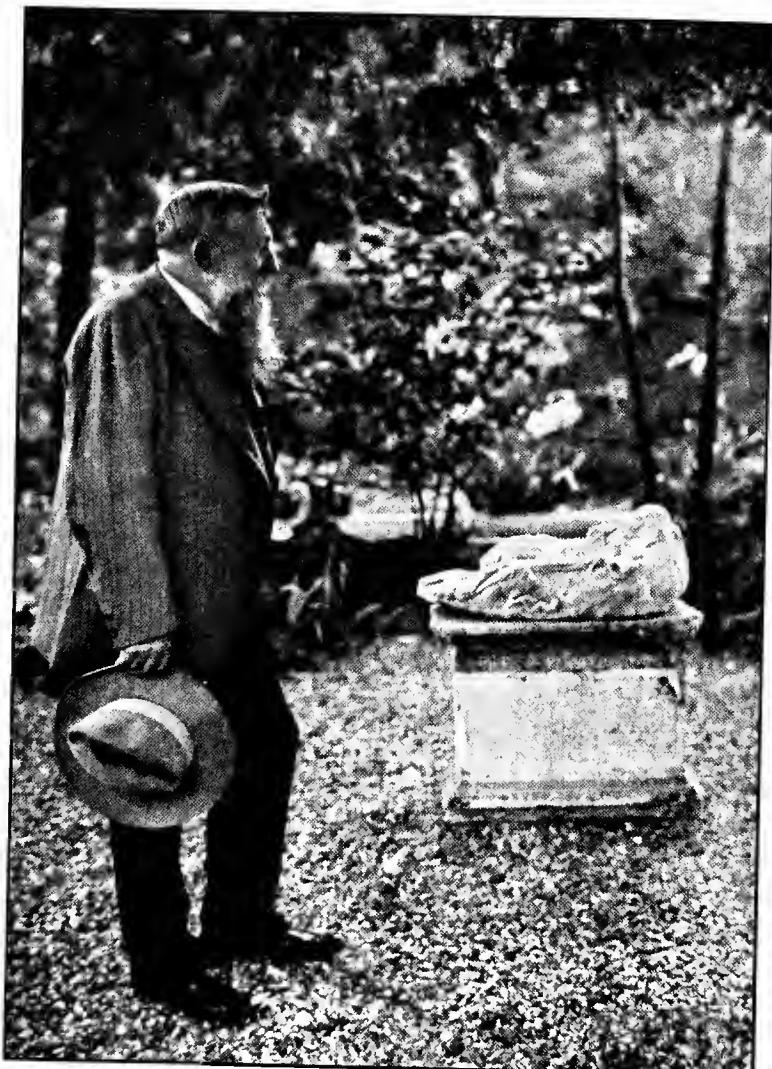
With this universal youth new thoughts are born. In this delightful retreat one feels that only an antique statue could add to its beauty.

The trees expand with vigor, their buds outlined against the sky. The rest of the lane seems an avenue of enchantment. Far down at the end I seem to see happiness. But no, I am wrong: it is not only in the distance; it is here, all about me, now.

The slanting rays of the sun strike the trees and the grass; over the lane bluish shadows play. The spreading shade of the trees falls softly on the fresh green. Those little dashes of blue among the grass are forget-me-nots. Those beautiful trees, garbed only since a week ago, trail their lovely green draperies on the ground, while detached garlands cling to the shrubs.

The majesty of youth in nature is unique; it is charm





RODIN IN HIS GARDEN

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itself, an inimitable thing. Yet some men of genius have been able to express the spirit of spring.

The very soul of meditation dwells in this garden, in this alley of trees. Polyhymnia, the Muse, in her graceful draperies, walks with me, and I follow her reverently.

Away from the turmoil, I can forget the constant hurry of our days. How we allow ourselves to be harassed! Reaching out for everything without possessing anything truly, we do not even realize what treasures we have lost. A few puffs of empty air are not poetry, and seeing happiness in the distance is not enjoying it. What hurries you? Ah, your life is out there, elsewhere? Go, then; but I shall remain here with the antique in my charming garden.

I will sit down on this old stone bench, surrounded by dense shrubs. The dead wood is piled in little heaps. The tree-tops form a semicircle, and stand out like a pantheon against the sky. The branches bear the marks of lightning and grow in zigzag. The sap of the earth rises in the arteries of the trees, ever ready to take part in the great festival of spring.

Now the charm of the alley consists in the differences of light and shade. As the one strives to advance, the other recedes toward the dale. The shadows disperse for the morning, leaving behind their beneficent moisture for their friends, the flowers of this dale.

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

Before me, on a knoll, stands a beautiful column, as if in prayer. It seems to have sprung from the kingdom of Pluto, and now, like us, it stands in the bright sunlight, a part of the out-of-doors.

Stone, pure and beautiful material, destined for the work of men, just as flax is destined for the work of women. A gift scarcely hidden under the earth, man has seized upon stones with rapture, carefully drawing them from their dark hiding-place, to raise them on high as in church towers, making them tractable, transforming the crude rocks, and appropriating them for masterpieces. Under the protection of man's sacrilegious hand, these stones lend beauty to our cities. They have a tender sympathy with the trees, the roots of which join their own.

Both hard and soft stones have a place in man's esteem. Sculpture has glorified them. The column is like a tree, but simpler than a tree, with a silent life of its own. And like the plants which cling about it, it also has its foliage and leaves. The artist who conceived the Sphinx made her to be the guardian of temples and secrets.

That column there rises up like a druid-stone, as though to converse with the moon at night. It awaits the appearance of man in the solemn ritual of night, for in its immensity it bears witness that man has created it. Man, too, has had his part, an ephemeral

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part, in the creation; his idea strives with the works of God, as Israel strove with the angel. His illuminating thought, expressed in stone, arouses those who otherwise might be insensible to beauty. The hand of man, like the hand of God, can transform a soul and make it new.

Mystery in which I have lived, but which I understand only now that I am about to depart. The marvel of it all! And to think that one must leave it! Well, that is the lot of all other living creatures.

And now the blue of the sky has grown darker, without a shadow, while beauty itself has taken its abode in these avenues of trees. Now and then passing clouds dim the glory of this splendid youth of nature, but the green is brilliant even in the shadow. High up among the trees, I see a blue river, the sky, while the great clouds, mountains of water, are hanging above to quench the thirst of the flowers.

## AN ANTIQUE FRAGMENT

Twenty times a day I walk in front of this little torso. I bring all my friends to see it, for Greek sculpture is the very source of beauty.

Why am I surprised whenever I look upon this torso? I think it is because nature, which is behind this work of art, always calls forth new, unlooked-for sensations.

Venus, glorious Venus, model of all women, your

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purity survives even after two thousand years. Your charm charms me—me who have admirers for my own sculpture. Before you they remain cold; but I, with a spirit that sees further—I admit my defeat as an artist, my poor ability vanishes before your grace.

Form, as I used to express it, seems a mere illusion before the harmonious strength of your lines, which embody the very truth of life. Divine fragment, I shall live by you! What days you recall to me! Perhaps the last moments of the soul of Greek sculpture, ever-increasingly my Muse.

This torso shows the suppleness and strength of the joints. It is a summing-up of former masterpieces of the artist. Those endless studies that grow into experience and all the qualities of balance are here concealed beneath the beauty and the gracious inspiration of the figure. The inspired sculptor has just discovered all these qualities, and in appreciation has given expression to them with his very soul.

An antique piece of sculpture cannot be imitated. This torso seems to have a soul. Are not the shadows trembling on it there? One can see them move.

What a progress toward truth we find in the advance from Assyrian and Egyptian to Greek art! Antique things, if we knew how to look at them, would bring about a new renaissance for us, we who stagnate in the Parisian spirit. The Parisian spirit, young though it

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is, is already too old to serve us. It is like those pretentious monuments, those constructions in plaster, which are hollow and horrible under their crumbling stucco.

Greece was the land of sculpture beyond all others. The subject of their sculpture was life. The people concealed it under names and symbols,—Jupiter, Apollo, Venus, the fauns,—but behind all these was the eternal truth of life.

This torso on my table looks as though it had been washed to the shore by the loving waves, as boats are stranded on the beach at low tide. What more beautiful offering could be made to men and gods? For is this fragment not an eternal prayer?

The thoughts expressed in this torso are numerous, infinite. I could write about it forever. Do I bring these thoughts with me? Is it I who put them into the marble? No, for when it is out of my sight, this divinity of life vanishes from me at the same time. Since it ceases to be in me, it must be the fragment which possesses it. It teaches a sculptor more than any professor could. It whispers secrets to me, and if I am true to it, it will tell me more and more; it will transform me in harmony with the soul of its friend, the Greek sculptor. For are not the thoughts of God expressed all the world over? Are they not the fruitful germs, now growing within a brain, now in a beautiful grouping of stone,

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and now captured by those magicians, the poets? And are sculptors, too, not like poets?

Where can one find more perfect harmony than in this fragment? It is a monument. And is it not providential? It is only a fragment, yet it seems to embody the whole Acropolis. Truth, that lasting joy, fills in all that is missing. It is a fact that this torso, which weighs one hundred and sixty pounds, seems as light as the woman herself would be, as light as her gracious, swelling flesh. I know contours, but the contours of a masterpiece always surprise me anew. Whenever I see you, beautiful little torso, my eyes and my soul feast on you. Masterpiece, you are my master, too.

If, as they say, stones have fallen from heaven, this surely must be one of them. I leave it in the condition in which I found it, as it first appealed to me, with all its charm, as I carried it in my arms to this table. The changing lights of day mold it; but I shall not touch it, I shall not change it. It is truth itself, and it shines in no matter what surroundings.

This torso has within it the seductiveness of woman, that garden of pleasure the secret charms of which imbue old and young alike with a terrible power. Feminine charm which crushes our destiny, mysterious feminine power that retards the thinker, the worker, and the artist, while at the same time it inspires them—a compensation for those who play with fire!

## AN ARTIST'S DAY

It is not by analysis that you will learn to understand art, you who are ignorant. Greek art eludes the imbeciles and ignorant who have always undervalued it. How can one comprehend this beauty by mere analysis? Where lies the secret of force? It is ever shifting. And the shadow, so genially arranged, varies with the way the light strikes it. In art, what do we call life? That which speaks to you through all your senses. If this torso were to bleed, it could not be more lifelike. The harmony of its lines dominates my soul. The soul lives and grows on masterpieces. That is why we have a soul.

Is it surprising, then, that I live with these antiques of mine, poets far more inspiring than any of our day? They have created beings that will live to survive us.

## AN EVENING IN THE GARDEN

I leave my exacting work always more and more its slave. Walking, because of its regularity, always refreshes me. Such a walk means a great deal to me. It puts my nerves into a state of delightful tranquillity.

The trees are still bare of leaves and have a wintry look. At their base there are dainty sprouts, clouds of green. The lawns are ponds of emerald green. The charm of this alley is partly due to the twigs and shoots that sprout out of the ground and spring up like a cloud of lace.

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

There is a faint decline in this soft brightness, for now the sun is setting. The sun-god is moderating his power for the benefit of the little flowers which otherwise would dry up and fade. This is the hour when the sun lends full value to the works of man, so that architecture stands out in all its beauty, while at the same time the sun softly colors the lovely clouds.

The pediment of the Palais Biron is brilliant in the sunlight. The balcony casts shadows on the grimacing consoles, and the shell-work is luminous in this glorious light. The window-panes glow in glory. The great staircase seems arranged for ladies to descend on their way to the garden, graciously trailing their long robes, which rustle over the steps.

Like a pilgrim, full of hope, who rests a moment at the gates of a town, and breathes the balmy evening air, so I seat myself in this garden. The hour passes quickly, but it could not be better employed than in absorbing these marvels.

When the sun drops behind the horizon, with its glowing colors like the flaming fires of a forge, our hearts are filled with wonder and awe. It gilds all in a last golden glory of triumph, the sky so brilliant that one cannot define the line of the horizon. There, where the sun disappeared, the sky is now orange. Everything is fading away; another immensity spreads out



THE POET AND THE MUSES



## AN ARTIST'S DAY

before us. The glory of night is about to extend over the firmament its melancholy charm.

The corner of this garden is a corner of happiness, a corner of eternity. Here thoughts can thrive and worship, for here they have everything. For the great things in life are not the exceptional things, but the beauties of every day, which we do not stop to notice. These vast treasures, within our grasp, which we do not even touch, they are the things that count.

The public believes that one is happy in the admiration of nature; but there are various degrees of happiness. Doubtless a glorious feeling of admiration may take hold of one; but if one does not constantly cling to one's admiration as a matter of habit, one grows weary and becomes superficial. Indeed, I do not know why we demand another life, since we have not learned to enjoy and understand this one fully. In any case, if we find this a bad world, it is our fault. We are childish about it. We belittle one another wilfully. Fancy the trees doing that, if one could suspect them of such a thing!

When I descend the steps, I am overwhelmed by that fluid which is life. I am in touch with life. What more can I want? This tenderness which surrounds me everywhere, this ever-varying nature which says so much to me, the atmosphere which envelops me—am I already in heaven, or am I a poet?

# V

## THE LINE AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE GOTHIC

One of Rodin's friends, M. Léon Bourgeois, the eminent, highly cultivated French statesman, has said, "Rodin is himself a cathedral." This remark wonderfully characterizes Rodin's intellectuality as it appears to us to-day. Rich in years and experience, his intellect is in truth as complicated as a cathedral, but like it, too, superbly simple in its general structure. His intellect possesses the wealth of detail that makes up life and the calm balance of the laws that govern nature. His mind, formed on principles scrupulously controlled by observation, abounds in that wonderful artistic imagination which is the poetry of life. Ever renewing itself, ever active, his mind inspires intense confidence because it is deeply rooted in truth. It looks at its subjects of study with such conscientious devotion that it perceives every phase of reality; for it is only love such as this, a love springing not from impatience and passion, but from faith and hope, that is always victorious in the end.

Churches! He lives near them, so as to study them in the fleeting changes of the hours. He likes to be enveloped by the sound of the church bells that for seven or eight centuries have spoken the same language of discipline to the spirit of France. Day and night he visits the naves. There his soul feels the sacred mystery. The churches are truly the cradle of his artistic faith.

But it is only recently that the joys which he drew from them

## LINE AND STRUCTURE OF THE GOTHIC

reached their height; for although he was long under the influence of Gothic art, that most extraordinary product of the hand of man, only in the last few years has he learned to penetrate its principles and understand its methods.

How often in my youth I questioned him about the cathedrals! He always replied with that caution which in deep natures is a form of deference: "I am pervaded by the marvel of this art; but I cannot as yet explain it to myself. The Gothic is the world foreshortened. Where am I to begin? For more than thirty years I have been accumulating and comparing my observations. Perhaps eventually I shall succeed in deducing the rule, the law of divine intelligence; but perhaps I shall not have sufficient time. Then it will be the task of another, younger than myself, who will start his researches earlier, and who, besides, will have been informed by me."

On his return from each of these pilgrimages he was possessed by the happy restlessness of one who would soon be able to give expression to his secret. One felt that "the law of divine intelligence" was being formulated in his mind. I then hoped and expected that soon he would reap the fruit of his long labors.

At last one day Rodin took me to Notre Dame, beautiful among the beautiful, despite the modern restorations that have detracted from the grace and suppleness of its sculpture. Notre Dame of Paris is beautiful in itself and in its situation on the banks of the Seine, that river of feminine grace, which in its innocent course draws with it the memory of many terrible historic events.

From Notre Dame to Saint-Eustache, from the Tour Saint-Jacques to Saint-Etienne-du-Mont, during this long walk of ours Rodin talked, quite unaware of the curious glances of those who

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

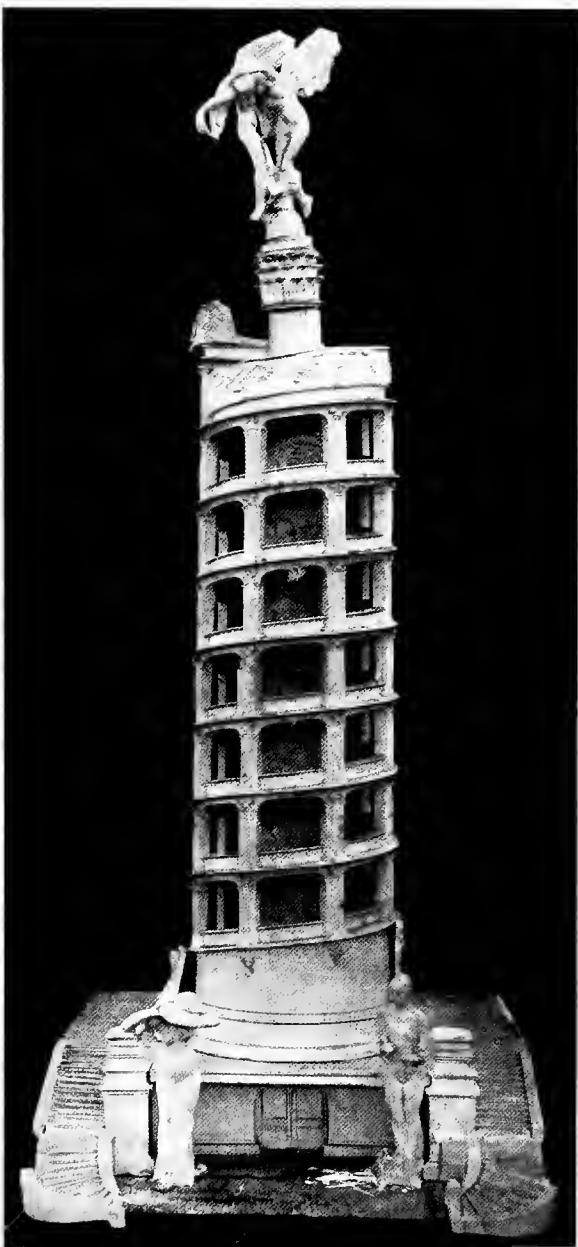
recognized him, and of the scoffing of the street urchins, who mistook the great Frenchman for a stranger discovering the capital of France. Later he gave me numerous notes that supplemented his conversations.

His words and notes combined form the clearest and most important lesson on Gothic art that has been handed down since the days of the Gild of the Francs-Maçons, by one of their own sort, a craftsman such as they were, a veritable sculptor, a stone-cutter loving the material in which he works.

Has Rodin, after so thoroughly grasping the secrets of the builders of bygone days, never felt the desire to apply them in the execution of some work of architecture? Was he never tempted by their example and by that of Michelangelo to expand his resources beyond those of the sculptor? Those who know the creative power and the vastness of imagination of the modeler of "The Burghers of Calais" and of "The Gate of Hell" may well ask this question.

Well, yes, he has had that great dream, which in more prolific times would have become a glorious reality. He hoped to revive the spirit of a day when a whole nation of artists covered France with masterpieces; he hoped to organize labor collectively, and to gather about him a legion of artisans to work together on a monument which should become in a certain sense the cathedral of the modern age.

He even drew up plans for that wonderful project, the subject of which was to be the glorification of labor, that triumphant force of our present civilization. He did not plan to rival the Gothic style, the prodigious achievement of which would have required throngs of workmen thoroughly organized and disciplined, well trained under the system of master and apprentice,



THE TOWER OF LABOR



## LINE AND STRUCTURE OF THE GOTHIC

accomplishing their common task in the joy of work and the enthusiasm of faith. He planned to approximate the art of the Renaissance, less removed from modern intellectuality, and simpler of execution.

In Rodin's studio at Meudon one can see the plan for this monument. The axis is a high column calling to mind Trajan's Column, and, like it, covered with bas-reliefs. A tower broken by large openings, as in the Tower of Pisa, encircles it. In the interior a gradually inclining way leads one from the base to the top along the bas-reliefs. These represent all the active crafts and trades: those of the cities, such as masons, carpenters, weavers, bakers, brewers, glass-workers, and goldsmiths; and those of the country, such as plowmen, harvesters, vintagers, vine-dressers, shepherds, and farmers. On the exterior, between the arches, stand statues of the great geniuses that have led humanity, whose efforts have raised them to celestial heights; that is, to the peace and happiness of creating. There great thinkers, inventors, and artists have their niches, just as the prophets have theirs in the vaults of cathedrals. The edifice rests on a crypt where groups of sculpture are devoted to the glorification of work under the earth and its obscure heroes, miners, divers, pearl-fishers. At the time when the plan for this monument was advanced, and was exciting the imagination of European writers and journalists, an ardent admirer of Rodin even proposed to build the tomb of the master under the crypt, where he would have had a resting-place worthy of a Pharaoh. On each side of the entrance is a statue representing Morning and Evening, and at the summit of the column two angels, messengers of God, their hands outstretched toward the earth with a gesture of exquisite tenderness, shed the blessings of heaven on the work of man.

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

Alas! this noble, stirring project will not be realized during the life of the artist. Will there some day be another possessed of the ardor and love of beauty necessary to build this mountain of stone?

For a time Rodin's friends hoped that America, the nation of work par excellence, would seize upon this idea. They pictured the philanthropists of the New World in characteristic fashion pouring forth millions for this work of universal art and national glorification; they saw Rodin being called to the United States, gathering about him not only American artists, but all the intelligent forces of the world of culture. They saw the Tower of Labor, with its angels bestowing their benediction over some formidable industrial city, New York, Pittsburgh, or Chicago. This might have been the starting-point for a new era of art, for nothing is more contagious than the realization of beauty in actual form.

Doubtless the writers of France did not discuss the matter long or forcibly enough, and the *Tour de Travail*, which might have been the ardent expression of a whole race, will remain the idea of a solitary genius, a last offshoot of the masters of the Middle Ages.

But if the hour has not yet struck for the construction of the modern cathedral, at least we possess, thanks to the man who dreamed of erecting it, the secrets and principles of those who constructed the cathedrals of bygone days.

## LINE AND STRUCTURE OF THE GOTHIC

**T**O acquire a thorough and fruitful understanding of the cathedrals, we must break away from the narrow and cold spirit of the present day. The spirit of our time does not harmonize in architecture with the monuments of the past.

First let us contemplate the whole. The church is a cliff. The construction of the slender side springing up is quite in the spirit of our race. The Gothic towers are stones set up like Druidic monuments. The church is laid out like a dolmen, and the towers are the menhirs. Like the menhirs, they have beautiful, flexible lines; they possess the eloquence of natural outlines, which are never cold or meager.

The line of the Gothic tower is slightly curved, swelling like that of a barrel. A straight line is hard and cold. The Greeks perceived that; they refrained from straight lines, and the columns of their temples also show a slight swelling.

The two sides of the Gothic tower are not alike. The architects considered that preferable to obvious symmetry. Look at the Tour Saint-Jacques in Paris. One of the sides shows a long, sloping hollow, making it look quite different from the other, which, again, is like stones set on high. The hollowed line permits protuberances, details of ornamentation that soften and harmonize with the line of the ensemble. It has been restored, and therefore from near at hand seems cold, for

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

our workmen have lost the science and art of modeling. But the beauty of the general structure remains; they could not detract from that.

This softened line, this line full of life, is one of the chief characteristics of the Gothic. The sky of our northern climates ordained it so, for the architects of the Middle Ages carved their monuments out of doors. Once the general plan was established, they easily found the details while working with their tools, guided by the light and influenced by natural conditions.

Our light is not that of Greece. Humanity the world over is akin; but to what the Greek expressed in a chastened manner, in keeping with his eternally pure light, we have added the oblique slant of our sun, our reality, our country, our autumns, the sting of our winters, our less definite spirit, our remoteness from the glaring Olympian sun; and, last of all, we have added our trees.

We also have light, but it is frequently obscured by passing clouds. Is it not natural that we should reproduce them in our art? And the line, the abundant line, is more accentuated in the half-night of our long autumns. Thus we are more in the mood of our woods and our forests. Our souls have more shadows than the Greek soul, our determinations are more varied; for our clouds and our forests are reflected in our hearts.

Artists, let us, then, revert to the interpretation of

## LINE AND STRUCTURE OF THE GOTHIC

our race, but in the spirit, not in the letter. Let us copy only the soul of our external nature, not its Gothic form, for a mere copy is cold and dead. Beautiful architecture is a reproduction by man, but from a divine model. From this it receives the warmth of life. If architecture is true to the spirit of nature, it is embraced by the trees, the rocks, the clouds; they are the silent company of beauty.

O Cathedral! Sphinx of Northern life! although mutilated, are you not eternal? Do you cease to live? From a distance, and in the evening, when dusk sets in, you seem truly a great sphinx crouching in the country.

The drama that unfolds itself on the stone pages of the churches recalls to us with a very few gestures and movements the silent drama of antiquity, the sculptures, illustrations of *Æschylus* and *Sophocles*.

From the Greek type, in truth, sprang the thoughts that guide man, and again from the Egyptian granite; and eventually from the stone of the Gothic, that Gothic which leads to the period of Louis XVI, and which in France is always the principal path of art. Other styles were derived from it, those of the fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. Their basis is Gothic; therefore the Gothic is the fundamental style, which ought to keep us from the path of decadence, if that is possible. You do

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

not understand it? You say you prefer the Greek? O ye mortals that wish to pass judgment on all matters, take heed lest these masterpieces prevail against you! The cathedral is as beautiful, perhaps more beautiful, than the Parthenon. If you do not understand this style, then you are still further removed from the Greek, which is of another country and epoch. It is more beautiful, perhaps more concise, more marble; but we belong more with stone and forests, we are more autumnal, more of the cold and melancholy season.

### THE GOTHIC BUILDERS ARE REALISTS

Do not let us lose sight of the fact that beneath this poem of stone there is a foundation of knowledge based on a close and comprehensive study.

To-day I understand it. As a result of study, one truth after another comes to light. At the outset one is lost before these marvels. Where is one to begin studying? One's thoughts and one's admiration rise like clouds. The mind makes prodigious leaps to grasp again what it already knows, to combine it with the recently acquired knowledge, to attempt to draw conclusions which simplify and generalize the study, and thus to discern the fundamental law.

For a long time during my youth I thought, like many others, that Gothic art was poor. I was so ungrateful during the first enthusiasm of my liberty! I learned

## LINE AND STRUCTURE OF THE GOTHIC

to understand its grandeur only through traveling. Observation and work led me back to the right road. In the course of my efforts I have grasped the meaning of the thoughts of the masters. My persistent work was not futile, and, like one of the Magi, I have at last come to bow in humble reverence before them.

— A true artist must penetrate the primordial principles of creation; only by understanding the beautiful does he become inspired, and that not through a sudden awakening of his sensibilities, but by slow penetration and perception, by patient love. The mind need not be quick, for slow progress should imply precaution in every direction.

The Gothic builders are the greatest observers of nature that have ever existed, the greatest realists, despite all that professors and critics say to the contrary. They call them idealists. They say the same of the Greeks and of all artists whose profound knowledge has enabled them to borrow their effects and charm from nature. Idealists! That is a term which signifies nothing and merely confounds cause and effect.

Builders of the Middle Ages, you independent scholars, models of a profound intelligence, this is what our age has found as an explanation of your masterpieces!

I have devoted my whole life in endeavoring to catch a glimpse of the rules, the secrets of experience, which you transmitted to one another, and it is only now,

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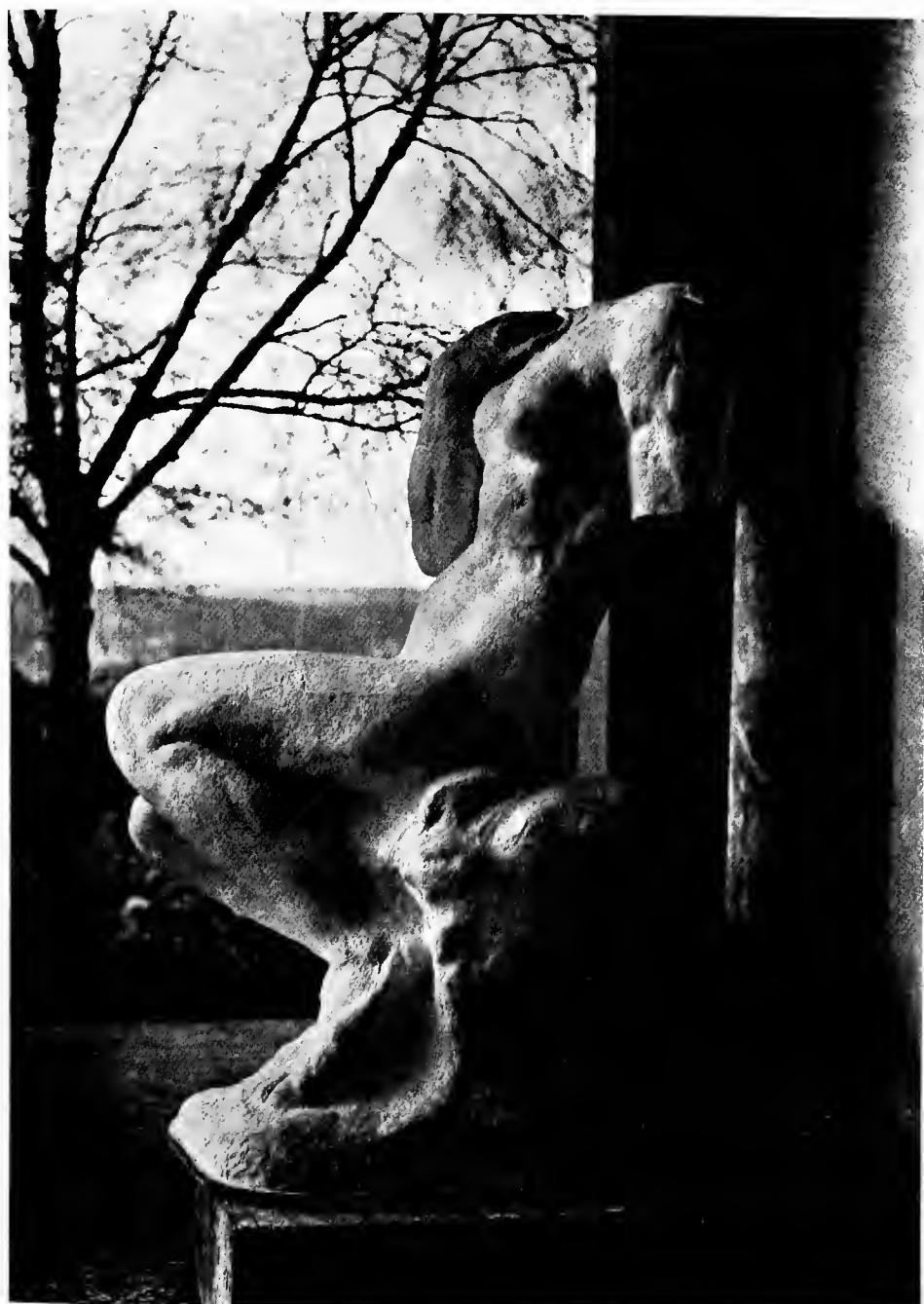
when my days are numbered, that I am at last grasping the synthesis of beauty. To whom shall I confide the fruit of my research? Some future genius will gather it. The cathedral is eternal, rising toward the sky. When we think it has attained its ultimate height, it rises again higher still, like a mountain of truth.

### PLANS AND OPPOSITIONS

The architects of our churches subordinated detail to arrive at a more effective whole. That is why our churches are so beautiful when seen from a distance. They sacrificed everything to the essential, the "plan."

The plan? Like all synthetic conceptions, this is difficult to define. It is the space that an object displaces in the atmosphere, its volume. When an artist is able to determine exactly the space an object occupies in the atmosphere, be he painter, sculptor, or architect, he possesses the real science of plans.

What is detail in a plan? Nothing. The towers of the church at Bruges are superb in their bareness, while our modern houses, overladen with detail, are hideous to look upon. Of the two towers of the cathedral at Chartres, the one is bare, just a huge wall; the other is covered with ornamentation, and the first is possibly the more beautiful because of the potency of its plan. What does this force of simplicity express to us? It is the soul of a nation. A people expresses its nature



HEADLESS FIGURE



## LINE AND STRUCTURE OF THE GOTHIC

through the medium of its architecture. Stones are faithful when we do not retouch them. They are the signatures of a nation.

Through the science of plans the great oppositions or contrasts of light and shadow are obtained. They give life and color to the structure. According to the position of the sun, the appearance of a building varies. One part is in the shade, the other in the light, and between these two is the gradation of shadings.

The master architects did not set their edifices apart from the universe; they gave them the benefit of all the phenomena of nature—dawn and dusk, twilight, cloud effects, haze, and fog. Every moment of the day adds to or detracts from their effect.

Sometimes I stand before a cathedral, and it does not seem at all beautiful. I feel I should like to alter it. Then I revisit it at another hour and see it in a different lighting. The light strikes it aslant, the shadows are deeper; the cathedral is absolutely beautiful, and I feel abashed at my former impatience and critical mistrust.

### THE SCIENCE OF EQUILIBRIUM

These great effects of light and shade, obtained by the plan—effects simple in their means, yet mysterious in their power of attraction for us, have strengthened the idea that Gothic art is idealistic. The masses who see the cathedral dominating the city, with its two

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

slanting roofs like hands joined at the finger-tips, certainly feel in it the great idea, the poem. They do not realize that the sentiments aroused in them by the beauty of the building are wholly due to the science of the plans.

By means of what principle did the master builders support the weight of these enormous masses of stone, which yet join lovingly in the imponderable atmosphere? By obeying the law of equilibrium of the human body. The human body, standing upright, the feet joined, in equilibrium, is the basis of the Greek column. Pediments and roof, supported by a series of these standing bodies, these human columns, that is the Greek temple. The architecture of the Parthenon reproduces the equilibrium of the body in a state of rest. In action the body sways; that is to say, the weight rests on only one leg, while the body inclines to the opposite side to regain its balance by counterpoise. That is the sway of Gothic architecture. This sway constitutes the law of motion for the body of man and animal, ever seeking perfect equilibrium.

Without this law we could not move; we would be like blocks of stone. Every motion that we make produces an initial swaying, which an opposing weight instantaneously balances. Thus without any consciousness on our part a perpetual balancing is taking place within us, a change as facile and immediate as the

**LINE AND STRUCTURE OF THE GOTHIC**  
changes which take place in the phenomena of respiration and circulation. All goes on with the speed, order, and silence that exist in the domain of electricity. It is a perpetual prodigy to which we do not even give a thought.

It is not surprising that the Gothic masters, who copied from all nature, took from man and animals the charm of balance.

The ogive (pointed arch) of the cathedral, is achieved by two opposing thrusts. But the archivolts do not always harmonize with the capitals; they are not set exactly over them, they are out of the perpendicular. Two movements of equal force, exactly opposed, cause a stable equilibrium. Just so the masses of stone are supported by this same opposition of thrusts.

The interior of the cathedral is high and vast, broken by large windows that diminish the resistance and help to support the great weight. It was necessary to find a way of reestablishing the equilibrium, lest the nave break down under its own weight. That is the purpose of the flying buttresses. Like the arms of giants, they throw their opposing weight against the exterior walls.

Some have drawn the conclusion that cathedrals are imperfect, since they cannot stand without this support. It is a characteristic idea of our age. Just as though one would reproach the human body for bearing first on one leg and then on the other.

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

These powerful buttresses are wonderfully effective in their contrast to the lacework of the sculpture. What is more beautiful than Notre Dame in Paris at night, with its island as its pedestal? It is the huge skeleton of the France of the Middle Ages which appears to us here. How attractive the light and shade on the buttresses! Indeed, it took genius to bring out beauty in that which is in reality only the skeleton of the edifice, and which could be offensive, were it badly carried out.

### THE LACEWORK OF STONE

The Gothic style exists by virtue of oppositions, contrasts in effects and in balance. They built huge bare walls, but in the upper heights ornamentation flourishes and abounds. There the "increase and multiply" of the Bible has been figuratively carried out.

Once the basis of construction was established, the masons embellished the "line" by admirable ornamentation, due to their splendid workmanship. We should never forget that modeling supplies the life-blood to the mass; without it we can have neither grace nor power.

Formerly I did not understand the architecture; I merely saw the lacework of the Gothic. But even in my conception of that I was mistaken, for I thought it a caprice of genius. I did not know that it had a sci-

## LINE AND STRUCTURE OF THE GOTHIC

tific *raison d'être*; namely, to break and soften the line. Now I see its importance: it rounds off the outlines; it gives them life and warmth. These statues, these graceful caryatids, propping up the portals, these copings in the covings, are like vegetation which softens the rigid summit of a wall. There again we find the Gothic artists as skilful colorists as the cleverest painters, because they have gained insight from the vegetation of our country. In our plants, in our trees, all is light and shadowy, and from them they gained their wonderful mastery of the art of depth, which brings out the finest shadings of light, the mellowness of half-tints. To-day we misuse black, the medium of power. We use it too extensively; we put it everywhere for the sake of effect, and therefore lose its effect entirely.

The Gothic is nature transposed and reproduced in stone. To show admiration for this form of art is to preserve the memory of the creation. The artist is the confidant of nature. Shakspere says in "King Lear," we

. . . take upon 's the mystery of things,  
As if we were God's spies.

### THE NAVE

A church is spread out like a dolmen between two menhirs. The interior breathes the solemn calm of a forest, the columns are the trees, the masses of the base

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

are the rocks, the pointed arches are the massive roots, the vaultings are the caves, and the windows are radiant flowers in large bowls. When I emerge from the darkness of a cathedral, I feel as if I came from the shadow of a vast, extinguished world.

Without the brightening light of the stained-glass windows, our churches would be sad. In Spain the gloom is funereal, but the genius of France has understood how to capture the caressing light through its windows. The productiveness of the Celtic spirit is also noticeable in the capitals. Gothic art abandoned Greek ornament, which had been reproduced so often that it lost all significance. It found its models in the woods and gardens. From the oak it took its crown of foliage, from the thistle and cabbage their gracefully drooping leaves, and from the bramble its intertwined thorns. They made wonderful capitals by reversing the acanthus, and copying the languid grace of falling blossoms.

The cathedral of Bourges—the vastness of this church makes me tremble. One might say there are three churches in its three naves. Grandeur demands repetition. The superbness of this work of architecture enforces silence. People attribute their emotion here to religious sentiment alone, and do not realize that it is due also to the correct calculations of art. They do not realize that the impressive darkness of the vast church,

## LINE AND STRUCTURE OF THE GOTHIC

its lighting, the wax tapers here, and the daylight with its brilliancy there, have all been planned beforehand. The stained-glass windows of Bourges are dazzling, almost terrible, in their beauty. There are flashes as red as blood, and dashes of blue, a flame—the wounds of Christ, the funeral pile of Jeanne d'Arc. When the sun sinks, the bright light will fade away; then we have before us only the charming effect of bowls of flowers.

The legends which are told on the stained-glass are good enough to amuse children; but the glass itself, the splendor of its colors, the extent to which it harmonizes with the nave—all that is the actual result and object of profound thought. The Middle Ages put life into everything; they worshiped life. They drew extensively from nature, wisely realizing that its source is inexhaustible, while the day of man is fleeting.

### THE MOLDING

The science of plans, balance of volumes, and proportion in the moldings govern the spirit of Gothic art. Of late I believe I have discovered how the masters struck upon the beautiful Gothic molding, that undulating molding which gives so much suppleness to the architecture. I have found something new in the well-known, and beauty in forms which I did not understand before. This change is due above all to my

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

work. Having always studied more intensely, I can say that I have always loved more ardently.

I believe the masters of Gothic art got their ideas of molding through their understanding of the human body, and perhaps above all of the body of woman. The body, that human column, seen in profile is a line of projections and protuberances, of the nose, the chin, the breast, the flank. Thence springs the beautiful undulating line which is the outline of Gothic molding. For Gothic molding, like the Greek, is soft and swelling. The “douce” (a molding, concave above, convex below), a term of the trade, tender as the name of a woman, well expresses the charm of the beautiful French molding.

The proportions of molding exist in nature, but in such form that we have not yet been able to subject them to rules. It required men of positive taste, of most profound understanding, to grasp the harmony of these proportions and to express them in sculpture. One might say the Gothic architects understood molding by means of their intelligence as well as by means of their heart.

By means of the cathedral the artists of the Middle Ages have shown us the most impressive drama in existence—the mass. The mass has the grandeur of the antique drama. Greek tragedies are in fact only a form of the mass. The human mind starts afresh at different

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epochs. When the priest officiates, his gestures have the beauty of the antique, and this beauty merges into that of the church music, that sublime tongue, the voice of the sea. Then, when the crowds prostrate themselves, when they arise simultaneously, the undulation of their bending bodies is like the waves of the ocean. Truly the Gothic master builders were the familiar friends of the sublime. From what source did these men spring! From what minds did those ideas arise! God has shared his power with some of his sons.

## VI

### ART AND NATURE

**C**RITICIZING nature is as stupid as criticizing the cathedrals. It is the vice of our cold and petty age to criticize. It is the evil of decadent races. We are constantly being told that we live in an age of progress, an age of civilization. That is perhaps true from the point of view of science and mechanics; from the point of view of art it is wholly false.

Does science give happiness? I am not aware of it; and as to mechanics, they lower the common intelligence. Mechanics replace the work of the human mind with the work of a machine. That is the death of art. It is that which has destroyed the pleasure of the inner life, the grace of that which we call industrial art—the art of the furniture-maker, the tapestry-worker, the goldsmith. It overwhelms the world with uniformity. Once artisans created; to-day they manufacture. Once they rejoiced in the pleasure of making a work of art; to-day the workman is so bored in his shop that he has invented sabotage and has made alcoholism general.

The sight of a modern monument throws one into melancholy even while an ancient one has not ceased to enrapture. I visit a small city, and, losing my train,

## ART AND NATURE

am obliged to wait for the next one. I take a walk about the ancient church, a delicious thing, very simple, but with its Gothic ornaments placed with taste, in a delicate relief that, in the light, provides an enchantment for my friendly glances. In the little nave, which invites to calm, to thought,—thought as soft and composed as the light shadows that move slowly across the pillars,—I settle myself. Ah, I come away charmed. If I had waited in the station, I would have been wearied to death, and would have returned home fatigued and discontented. As it is, I have gained something—the beautiful counsels of moderation and the fine charm of a monument of former days.

Art alone gives happiness. And I call art the study of nature, the perpetual communion with her through the spirit of analysis.

He who knows how to see and feel may find everywhere and always things to admire. He who knows how to see and feel is preserved from ennui, that *bête noire* of modern society. He who sees and feels deeply never lacks the desire to express his feelings, to be an artist. Is not nature the source of all beauty? Is she not the only creator? It is only by drawing near to her that the artist can bring back to us all that she has revealed to him.

When one says this, the public thinks it a commonplace. All the world believes that it knows that; but

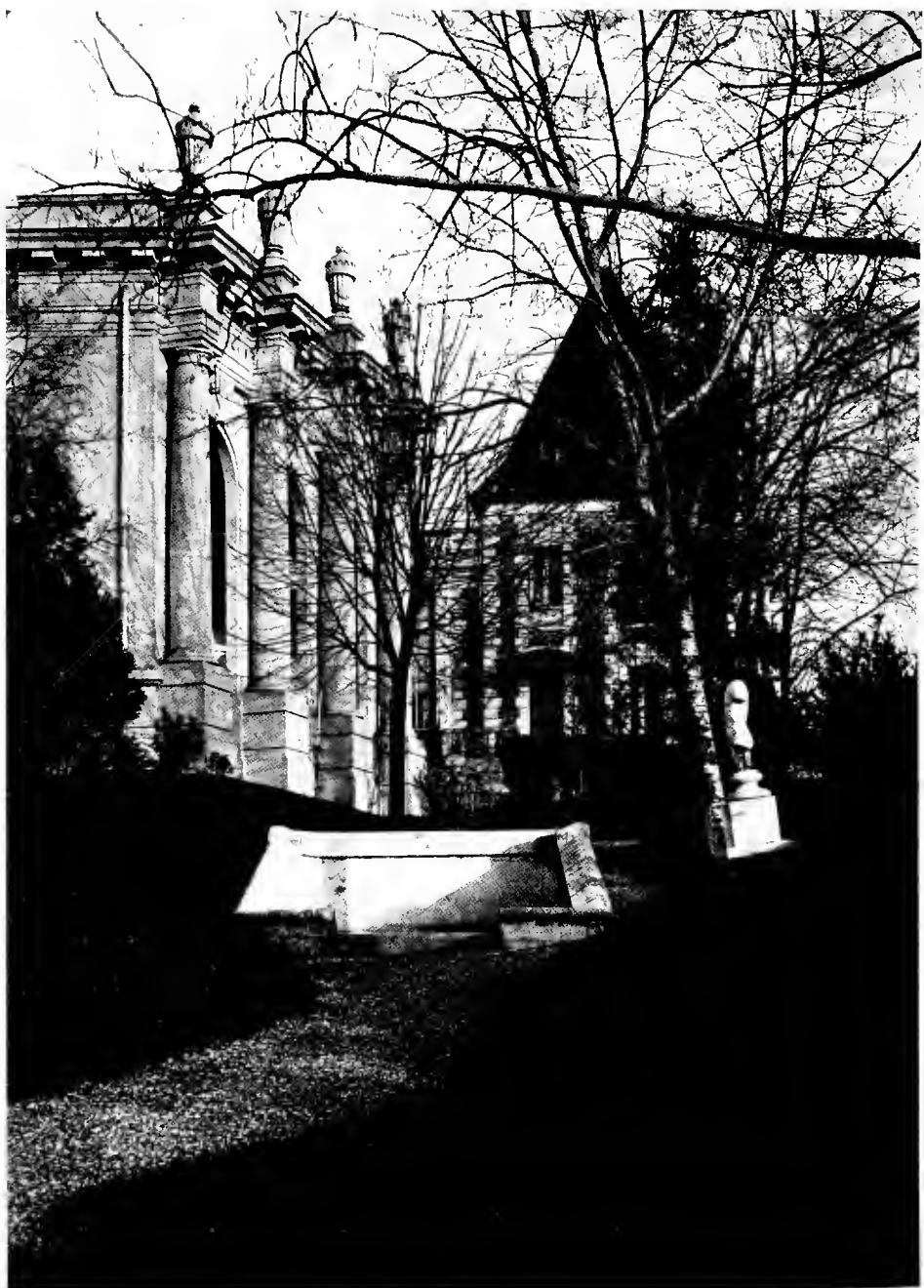
## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

it knows it only in seeming, the truth penetrates only the superficial shell of its intelligence. There are so many degrees in real comprehension! Comprehension is like a divine ladder. Only he who has reached the top rounds has a view of the world. The public is astonished or shocked when some one goes against its pre-conceived notions, against the prejudices of a badly interpreted or degenerate tradition. Words are nothing; the deed alone counts. It is not by reading manuals of esthetics, but by leaning on nature herself that the artist discovers and expresses beauty.

Alas! we are not prepared to see and to feel. Our sorry education, far from cultivating in us the feeling for enthusiasm, makes us in our youth little pedants who without result overwhelm ourselves and others with our pretensions. Those who too late, by long efforts, escape this demon of folly arrive only after that education has fatally sapped their strength and has destroyed the flower of enthusiasm that God had planted in them as a sign of His paradise. People without enthusiasm are like men who carry their flags pointed down to the ground instead of proudly above their heads.

Constantly I hear: "What an ugly age! That woman is plain. That dog is horrible." It is neither the age nor the woman nor the dog which is ugly, but your eyes, which do not understand. One generally





RODIN'S HOUSE AND STUDIO AT MEUDON

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disparages the things that are above one's comprehension. Disparagement is the child of ignorance. As soon as you discover that, you enter into the circle of joy.

Man, animals, down to the smallest insects, down to the infinitesimal; the earth, the waters, the woods, the sky—all are marvelous. The firmament is the vastest landscape, the most profound, the most enchanting, with its variations, its effects of color and light, which delight the eye, astonish the thought, and subjugate the heart. And to say that artists—those who consider themselves such—attempt to represent all that simply as it appears to them, without having studied it, without having deciphered it, without having felt it! I pity them. They are prisoners, slaves of stupidity.

I was like them in the first periods of my perverted youth, but I have delivered myself. I have regained the liberty to approach the things that I love by the pathway of true study. Who follows me on the road? Who can learn it from a study of sculpture and design in books? You who have caught a glimpse of the splendor of that tree, of that giant whose magnificent column has been denuded by autumn of its leafy capital, but which is perhaps more beautiful in the nudity of its members; you who admire the structure of its branches and twigs, etched in an infinitude of forms

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against the sky, where they resemble the lacework of the windows of our churches, would you not understand far better that beauty, would not your pleasure be far more complete, if you sketched that tree not only in the mass, but in the innumerable details of its framework? And to think that the schools recommend to pupils, painters, and sculptors research on the subject! The subject! The subject does not exist in that—the poor little arrangement that you, one and all, summon up while poring over the same anecdotes, the same conventional attitudes. The human imagination is narrow, and you do not see the hundred thousand motives of art that multiply themselves under your eye. I could pass my whole life in the garden where I walk without exhausting them.

The subject is everywhere. Every manifestation of nature is a subject. Artists, pause here! Sketch these flowers; writers, describe them for me, not in the mass, as has always been done, but in minute detail, in the marvelous precision of their organs, in their characteristics, which are as varied as are those of animals and men. How beautiful to be in the same moment an artist and a botanist, to paint and model the plant at the same time that one studied it! Those great realists, the Japanese, understand this, and make the knowledge and cultivation of plants one of the bases of their education.

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We place love and sensual pleasure in the same category. Undoubtedly it is nature herself who has led us astray in this by the instinct to perpetuate ourselves. In youth this instinct is like an overflowing river; it sweeps away everything, yet pleasure is everywhere about us. I imbibe it in the forms of the clouds that build their majestic architecture in the sky, in the rapture of this woman who holds her child in her arms, in attitude divine, so beautiful indeed, that the poet of the Gospels has deified it. It is the attitude of the Virgin. I imbibe it in the atmosphere which bathes me now, and will still continue to bless me, bringing me peace, rest, and health.

For that which is beautiful in a landscape is that which is beautiful in architecture—the air, space. No one in these days realizes its depth. It is this quality of depth that carries the soul where it wishes to go. In a well-constructed monument that which enraptures us is the science of its depths. The throngs in the churches attribute their emotion to mysticism, to the transport of the soul toward divinity. They are unaware that they owe their emotion to the exact knowledge of great planes possessed by the architects of former days. Even upon the most ignorant beholder they impose this. Man disregards that which he already has, and longs for something else. He longs for swiftness, to have wings like a bird. He does not know that he already enjoys

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this pleasure of moving through space. He rejoices in it in his soul, which takes wing and goes where it pleases, through the sky, on the waters, to the depths of the forests.

All the misfortune here below arises from a lack of comprehension. We classify our limited knowledge in narrow systems, like the card-systems of an office, and these pitiful conventions we take seriously. They teach us disconnected things, and we leave them disconnected. Those who have a little patience assemble these isolated facts; but such patient ones are rare, and nothing is so unbearable as that man who, not having it, speaks ill of him who has a sense of the truth. To see accurately is the secret of good design. Objects dart at one another, unite, and throw light on one another, explain themselves. That is life; a marvelous beauty covers all things like a garment, like an ægis.

God created the great laws of opposition, of equilibrium. Good and evil are brothers, but we desire the good, which pleases us, and not the evil, which seems to us error. When we consider matters from a distance, does not evil often seem good, and good, evil? That is only because we have judged without proper consideration. Just as white and black are necessary in a drawing, so good and evil are necessary in life. Sorrow ought not to be cast out. As long as we live it is as

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strong a part of life as radiant joy. Without it we would be very ill trained.

To comprehend nature it is of importance that we never substitute ourselves for it. The corrections that a man imposes upon himself are a mass of mistakes. The tiger has claws and teeth and uses them skilfully; man at times shows himself inferior. Possessing intelligence, too often he strives to turn to that. Animals respect everything and touch nothing. The dog loves his master, and has no thought of criticizing him. The average man does not care that his daughter should be beautiful. He has in his mind certain ideas of manner and instruction, and the beauty of his daughter does not enter into the program that he has made. But the daughter herself feels the influence of nature, and displays her modest and triumphant movements, which this blind one does not see, but which fascinate the artist.

The artist who tells us of his ideal commits the same error that this average man commits. His ideal is false. In the name of this ideal he pretends to rectify his model, retouching a profound organism which admirably combined laws regulate. Through his so-called corrections he destroys the ensemble; he composes a mosaic instead of creating a work of art; the faults of his model do not exist. If we correct that

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which we call a fault, we simply present something in the place of that which nature has presented. We destroy the equilibrium; the rectified part is always that which is necessary to the harmony of the whole. There is nothing paradoxical here, because a law that is all-powerful keeps the harmony of opposites. That is the law of life. Everything, therefore, is good, but we discover this only when our thought acquires power; that is to say, when it attaches itself indissolubly to nature, for then it becomes part of a great whole, a part of united and complex forces. Otherwise it is a miserable, debased, detached part contending with a whole that is formed of innumerable units.

Nature, therefore, is the only guide that it is necessary to follow. She gives us the truth of an impression because she gives us that of its forms, and if we copy this with sincerity, she points out the means of uniting these forms and expressing them.

Sincerity, conscience—these are the true bases of thought in the work of an artist; but whenever the artist attains to a certain facility of expression, too often he is wont to replace conscience with skill. The reign of skill is the ruin of art. It is organized falsehood. Sincerity with one fault, indeed with many faults, still preserves its integrity. The facility that believes that it has no faults has them all. The primitives, who ignored the laws of perspective, nevertheless created

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great works of art because they brought to them absolute sincerity. Look at this Persian miniature, the admirable reverence of this illuminator for the form of these plants and animals, and the attitudes of these persons which he has forced himself to render just as he saw them. How eagerly has he painted that, this man who loved it all! Do you tell me that his work is bad because he is ignorant of the laws of perspective? And the great French primitives and the Roman architects and sculptors! Has it not been repeatedly said that their style is a barbaric style? On the contrary, it has a formidable beauty. It breathes the sacred awe of those who have been impressed by the great works of nature herself. It offers us the strongest proof that these men had made themselves part of life and also a part of its mystery.

To express life it is necessary to desire to express it. The art of statuary is made up of conscience, precision, and will. If I had not had tenacity of purpose, I should not have produced my work. If I had ceased to make my researches, the book of nature would have been for me a dead letter, or at least it would have withheld from me its meaning. Now, on the contrary, it is a book that is constantly renewed, and I go to it, knowing well that I have only spelled out certain pages. In art to admit only that which one comprehends leads to impotence. Nature remains full of unknown forces.

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As for me, I have certainly lost some time through the fault of my period. I should have been able to learn much more than I have grasped with so much slowness and circumlocution; but I should not have tasted less happiness through that highest form of loss; that is, work. And when my hour shall come, I shall dwell in nature, and shall regret nothing.

### THE ANTIQUE—THE GREEKS

If the artists of antiquity are the greatest of all it is because they approached most closely to Nature.

They studied it with magnificent sincerity and copied it with all their intelligence. They never wasted their time in trying to invent something. To invent, to create, these are words that mean nothing. They contented themselves with rendering the adorable model that enchanted their eyes. This love and this respect for creation has never since their time been surpassed. They did not copy literally what they saw; to a certain degree they interpreted the character of forms. The aim of art is not to copy literally. It consists in slightly exaggerating the character of the model in order to make it salient; it consists also in reassembling in a single expression the successive expressions given by the same model. Art is the living synthesis.

This is what the ancients did, with what taste, what incomparable science! From this science that re-



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spected unity their works derived their calm, contained force, the sentiment of grand serenity, the atmosphere of peace that envelops them. The ignorant and the professors of esthetics who do not know the source of all this have named it Greek idealism. This is nothing but a word that serves to conceal a want of understanding. There is no idealism in the ancients; there is an exercise of choice, a marvelous taste; but it is by the most realistic means that they render human beauty.

We others, we moderns, are carried away by the restlessness of the epoch; we are superficial, we only regard things cursorily, and we have concluded from this sublime simplicity that Greek art is cold. To us indeed it seems very cold. It is really warm. To it alone belongs in this respect the quality of life, reality in forms, and precision in movement. It is through this that it attains perfect equilibrium. But that is beyond our little spirit of detail. We seek nothing but detail; the Greek, for his part, saw nothing but the whole; that is to say, the equilibrium, the harmony.

### THE RICHNESS OF THE ANTIQUE LIES IN MODELING

The value of the antique springs from *ronde-bosse*. It possesses in a supreme degree the art of relief. How can the critics and the professors explain this, being what they are? They do not belong to the trade.

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Art should not be taught except by those who practise it.

Observe any fragments of Greek sculpture: a piece of an arm, a hand. What you call the idea, the subject, no longer exists here, but is not all this debris none the less admirably beautiful? In what does this beauty consist? Solely in the modeling. Observe it closely, touch it; do you not feel the precision of this modeling, firm yet elastic, in flux like life itself? It is full, it is like a fruit. All the eloquence of this sculpture comes from that.

What is modeling? The very principle of creation. It is the juxtaposition of the innumerable reliefs and depressions that constitute every fragment of matter, inert or animated. Modeling creates the essential texture, supple, living, embracing every plane. It fills, coordinates, and harmonizes them. It penetrates everything, it animates everything, as well the depths as the surfaces. It comprises the minute as well as the immense. Mountain, horse, flower, woman, insect equally owe to it their form. When God created the world, it is of modeling He must have thought first of all. If you consider a hand, you notice its contours and the character of the whole. But the eye of the artist, that eye, sees more: it sees the infinite assemblage of projections and depressions forming a texture more closely knit, more exactly blended than the most per-

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fect mosaic. It is this that he seeks to render; this that he translates, if he is a sculptor, by the science of depression and relief, if he is a draughtsman or painter by that of light and shadow. For light serves, in conformity with depressions and reliefs, to give the eye the same sensation that the hand receives from touch: Titian is just as great a modeler as Donatello.

To-day the sense of *ronde-bosse* is completely lost, not only in Europe, but among the peoples of the Orient. It is the age of the *flat*. No one knows anything about it. Men love what they do themselves, until they are made to see that it is not beautiful; but it takes years and years for this to penetrate into their consciousness. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries China and Japan still produced charming works. In ancient times their art was very great; it approached the Greek. At the exposition of 1900, we were enabled to see antique Japanese statues, superb nudes nearly as fine as those of Greece. In our time the pest of flatness has contaminated the Asiatic races as well as the European: decadence is universal.

We are so far removed from antique beauty that when we photograph the works of the ancients we take them in the spirit of our own taste, which is that of low-relief; we take from them that flower of beautiful modeling, their richness, their crowning grace. When I say low-relief, I do not use this term exactly; it is only

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that I know no other means of expressing the modern evil of uniformity; but I know that good low-relief is as full and as fruit-like as sculpture in the round, that it is sculpture in the round itself, as in the friezes of the Parthenon, as in our buildings of the Renaissance and of the seventeenth century.

— The great concern of my life is the struggle I have maintained to escape from the general flatness. All the success of my sculpture comes from that. Although it has little enough taste, the public, despite all, is tired to death of this flatness. The charm of *ronde-bosse* is so great that it captivates the ignorant even without their knowing it.

### RONDE-BOSSE AND CHIAROSCURO

Observe this little torso of a woman; it is a little Venus. It is broken; it has no longer a head, arms, legs, yet I never weary of contemplating it; each day, each hour for me adds to this masterpiece because I only understand it better. What could it say to our indifferent glance? For me it has the ineffable voluptuousness of softly maturing flesh. The effect lies in no part and in every part. It is perfection. This little childish body, has it not all the charm of woman? It does not catch the light, the light catches it, glancing over it lightly; without any effect of roughness, any dark shadow. Here shadow can no longer be called shadow

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but only the decline of light. She does not become dark, she grows pale in imperceptible depressions, in delicious undulations. She is indivisible; she is whole or incomplete, but her unity is not disturbed. And this passage that joins the abdomen to the thighs, this little declivity of graces, this valley of love! Everything is full of the calm, the lightness, the serenity of pure beauty in the perfect confidence of nature. The ideal that you imagine you find in a gesture, in a momentary attitude, is here; it is here because of the infinite love of the flesh, of the human fruit. What you call the ideal is nothing but the perfume of beautiful modeling. What more could you ask?

When I look at this marble in the evening by candle-light, how the wonder deepens! If those who have been telling us for a hundred years that Greek art is cold studied it with care, could they for one hour maintain this absurdity? This sculpture, on the contrary, is of an extraordinary living complexity, which the flame reveals; the whole surface is nothing but depressions and reliefs, but united, melted together in the great, harmonious force of the *ensemble*. I turn the little torso about under the caressing rays of the light. There is not a fault, not a weakness, not a dead spot; it is the very continuity of life, its intoxicating voluptuousness hidden in the bosom of the molecule.

Why should such artists have sought to create an ab-

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stract Beauty by the idealization of forms? These men of genius loved Nature too well to presume to correct her. They knew well that despite their genius, they still remained beneath her. Nothing can surpass the marvel of creation. The conception of an idealistic art comes from the Academy. Before the purity of the antique forms people used to believe that the beauty lay solely in the exterior profiles. It is really beautiful because of the interior modeling. And still we make this distinction between the profiles and the modeling, thanks to our mania for dividing things; but we know that the one is inseparable from the other; the surfaces are nothing but the extremities of volumes, the boundaries of the mass.

All the sculpture of the period of Louis-Philippe was imitated from the antique, but only by means of the exterior profiles. If it had been practised by true modelers, by geometrical minds, it would have been as beautiful as its original. What pleased people in that epoch, what pleases people in ours, is not at all the antique; it is the fashion in which we see it. It was the Renaissance that really understood the Greek. It created works exactly the same in feeling, though somewhat different in arrangement and general color. For color does not exist in painting alone. Its rôle is equally great in sculpture. To-day this color is bad; it fails to obtain the chiaroscuro which derives from

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*ronde-bosse.* Good sculpture owes to chiaroscuro clarity, unity, charm, even, I might say, the voluptuousness of breathing flesh. Shadow, at once luminous and mysterious, models the fulness of the body in the exuberance of health; it makes one understand abundance, solidity. In the art of the Renaissance and the eighteenth century shadow is always supple and warm as in Greek art; it has the tender coloring of the vegetation of our country, the sweetness of which our great artists have captured. The chiaroscuro of the antique consists of the density and depth of light falling over the entire modeling. Chiaroscuro penetrates to every plane and renders the reality of them; it is reality itself. This is because the antique and nature are part and parcel of the same mystery, the infinitely harmonious mystery of force in suspense. The great artists compose as nature itself operates.

Undoubtedly the Greeks possessed certain methods which they handed down from master to pupil, as has been the case in all artistic epochs. They had celebrated ateliers, schools, where they taught their principles. By the fifth century they had established a canon of the human body; but they never made use of it without consulting the model. As for us, we have imagined that we could use it like a magic formula. It is not the formula that makes the art; it is the experience of the artist that creates the formula. If we aban-

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don nature for a rule, if we do not constantly vivify the one by means of the other, we soon speak a language that means nothing.

One cannot repeat this enough: the ancients are realists; they work in *ronde-bosse*. This explanation seems commonplace and even vulgar; it is the whole truth. It can be understood by the humblest artisan, provided only that he knows his trade. But it is as difficult to get it into the heads of people to-day as it is to restore faith in a man who has lost it.

## ROME AND ROMAN ART

What I have said of Greek art applies equally well to Roman. Another opinion has been adopted by critics and the world in general: the Roman is less beautiful than the Greek. It is less beautiful perhaps, by a certain shade, a shade which those who speak of it are incapable of appreciating. It is a little less substantial, but it is superb. It is Greek, with a different character, a certain ruggedness, and more! The Maison Carrée at Nîmes, that little temple, the flower of austerity, the smile of the race as sweet as the smile of Greece; the Pont du Gard, that heroic masterpiece, that giant which bestrides the country, which imposes the power of Rome on the peaceful landscape, these are what they criticize!

Rome is magnificent. We say it, but we do not be-

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lieve it; otherwise it would not be despoiled. No, in Rome itself, they have no idea of the beauty of Rome. Where are there artists great enough to appreciate you, severe genius, splendid city, daughter of the she-wolf? Your genius they pillage every day. They destroy its proportion, and that is to strike at the foundation of the master work. Proportion is the law of architecture. . . . In the very midst of the ancient city they are setting up atrocious monuments, enormous or too petty.

In Rome, as in Athens, as in the France of Gothic art, the architect of old planned the monument in relation to the landscape; he harmonized it with the outline of the mountains, with the expanse of the surrounding countryside; he determined its proportions according to its environment.

The architect of to-day plans out his monument in his own study on a piece of paper and produces it ready-made. Whether this mass of stone obliterates the buildings that surround it or whether, on the other hand, it turns out a miserable little contrivance in the midst of great works of the past matters little to him: he does not see it.

The French Academy sends students to work in Rome. But they get nothing from Rome, they can get nothing; they come there with a spirit entirely opposed to it. At a time when I did not know the city I heard the bridge of Sant' Angelo spoken ill of and fun made

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of the contorted angels; but they are all very well in their place; they are needed there; there is enough repose elsewhere. Bernini, so often sneered at, is as beautiful as Michelangelo, although he is not so fine. It is he who made the Rome of the seventeenth century. They do not know that the Appian Way is sublime. It will disappear one of these days. These things are awaiting their condemnation. They are constructing quays like ours. If they do not put a stop to it, Rome will be destroyed. Those who have not seen cities such as this was in the nineteenth century will not understand anything. I have said as much to my Italian friends, who appeared greatly astonished; for nobody makes these reflections which come to me constantly in my studies. They consider me a gloomy fellow, a misanthrope. Gloomy, yes; for it is painful to live in a decadent epoch; but I have no *parti-pris*; I only wish to try to arrest the general massacre. In France, as everywhere, we commit exactly the same faults. We destroy our monuments by surrounding them with great open spaces; we have ruined the effect of Notre Dame, on the side of the parvis. At Brussels, in the Musée du Cinquantenaire, they have set up a model of the Parthenon; but they have placed it in the midst of enormous objects that annihilate it. We have come to that! We have killed the Parthenon! Barbarism could go no further. We live in a barbarous age.

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There is no doubt about that! People cry out that we must create schools for people to learn art; we bungle the most beautiful of all schools—the Museum.

### FOR AMERICA

These things ought to be said again and again to the point of satiety, if we wish to save any remnants. Coming from me, whose opinions carry some weight, they are repeated when I am no longer on the spot. People feel the justice of them, the shaft goes home. A few who are more ardent than the rest propagate them and stir up a current of opinion that may lead to reform. There is no reason therefore to fear repeating them in America, where also people have fallen into the general error. American artists have followed our teaching, altogether in a bad sense. Notwithstanding that in taking their point of departure they could have escaped into the good epochs of art, they have saddled themselves with the poverty of modern taste.

Let them return to the school of the past; above all, let them return to nature; it is as beautiful with them as elsewhere. The mountains, the trees, the vegetation, the men and women of their own country—these should be their masters in architecture and sculpture. America is full of will. It desires to be a great nation. It stops at no expense in order to obtain instruction; it creates immense universities, libraries, museums. It

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pours into them streams of money. The favor with which my work has been received there is the sign of a movement toward truth in art; they are developing an affection for this naturalistic school which borrows from life its charm and its variety. But all this will be as nothing unless America creates work of its own; unless it breaks with the old errors of the nations of Europe in order to find the path of true science.





THE VILLAGE FIANCÉE

## VII

### THE GOTHIC GENIUS

#### TO THE RENAISSANCE AND THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

##### NOTRE-DAME

**N**OTRE DAME—Notre Dame de Paris—more splendid than ever in the half-light of this winter day. The veils of the atmosphere redress the evils that modern restorations have done to this monument; the folds of the mist soften the sharpness of the retouched outlines: the elements are more respectful to this masterpiece than are men.

I come upon it at the turn of the bridge. At once I drop out of this industrial epoch of ours, so poor despite its love of money; my sculptor's soul escapes from its exile.

The Gothic sphinx rises before me. The strength of its beauty overwhelms me. I struggle against it and I am broken by it. Then it attracts me anew with its sweetness; it exalts me. My spirit makes the ascent of this sculptured mountain. What power in these motionless stones to create the sense of movement in the mind! What makes this possible? The mason of genius; the science of oppositions. That whole effect

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

of power—he has put it in the thickness of the foundations, the enormous walls, the buttresses. They are as formidable as the tiers of a dike, as a breakwater planted in the sea. One would say that this church was built to combat the forces of nature: the temple of peace and love has the air of a fortress.

One's spirit is weighed down by the bareness of the stone, but stirred by the height of the structure and the towers; it soars toward them as toward a world that reassures it; the hard material has become humanized; the genius of man is at play there amid the lacework of stone. He has placed there angels, saints, animals, fruits, flowers, all the gifts of the seasons; it is life in its entirety such as the Creator in His infinite munificence has bestowed upon him. The Gothic artist knows that paradise is on earth; he has no need to invent another. The childish and monotonous heaven presented to us in our legends is nothing but a poor copy of the marvels of our life.

Let us enter. I tremble. The beauty is terrible. I am plunged into night, a living night in which I do not know what mysteries are being enacted—the cruel mysteries of the ancient religions? There are shimmering rays from the long windows, the rose windows. Hope enters my heart: there is light here, then? I am no longer alone.

My eyes grow accustomed to this populous obscurity.

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There is a world about me, a world of columns. It seems terrible, it *is* terrible because of its power, but this power has its *raison d'être*. It seems frightening to me but it is only necessary. It is distributed power; therefore it is beneficent. It holds the vault in the air, the prodigious weight of stone that it maintains aloft, above my head, as lightly as the canvas of a tent. Marvel of equilibrium, calculation of the intelligence, how is it possible not to adore you? It is you that one comes here to worship under the name of God.

The darkness grows lighter; it becomes chiaroscuro. We are in a picture by Rembrandt, that great Gothic of the sixteenth century. The forest of pillars divides the nave into spaces of shadow and light. It is the order of nature which knows nothing of disorder. This I rediscover with joy: the eye does not love chaos.

I familiarize myself with the people of the columns. I recognize them: they are Romans. It is the Roman, the Romance, hardly altered, that comes to receive the Gothic arch. The immense nave which I thought a forest full of hidden dangers I see, I understand, I read like a sacred book. The mystery is not that of cruelty; it is only that of beauty. It grows lighter gradually in order to allow the spirit to approach slowly the joy of a perfect interior. This solemnity of the nave, this immense void, is like the bed of a great river; the columns range themselves respectfully on each side

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in order to give free passage to the flood of human piety. It flows like a majestic river; it bears onward toward the tabernacle, about which it spreads itself like a lake of love under the rays of the thought of God. Amid the stones the architect has known how to play the part of the apostle: he has created faith. Art and religion are the same thing; they are love.

### SAINT-EUSTACHE

It is the interior of this church that should be admired. Here I do not experience the same commotion of the spirit as in Notre Dame. I am bathed in the fine light of the sixteenth century. At Notre Dame it was the shadow of Rembrandt; here, it is the clear tonality of French painting, of a Clouët. Admirable is the *élan* of this Renaissance nave; it is as bold as, and even perhaps bolder than that of the Gothic buildings. It proceeds on the same plan. The skyward lift is only to be found in the Gothic; it is of the very spirit of the race. Are the vaults round and no longer pointed? What does it matter if they are equally elegant, if they have the same aërial grace as the ogive?

What I rediscover in Saint-Eustache, less austere than its grand sister of the Middle Age, but with a sweetness which is itself noble, is the determination of the architect to subordinate everything to the effect of simplicity, to the total effect. On each side of the nave

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the columns cutting the side wall are disposed fanwise in order to hide the light of the lateral windows. One sees nothing but the stone, and yet there is no effect of heaviness; one could not make anything lighter. This is because the color of the stone is admirably varied by the diversity of the flutings that line the columns. The main fluting marks the outline, and the others, less emphatic, shading off, give it a velvet-like quality. The light throws a golden haze between the great columns, among the deep gorges, and is, on the other hand, channeled, streaked by the little nerves that impel it upward toward the vaults. By this effect of lightness the building seems to rise; it is an assumption. It is no longer the forest of trees that one finds here, but the forest of creepers. These vertiginous columns are like fine, delicate vines. Above the altar the great lights of the windows, with their beautiful glass, harmonize well with the general color. The light, at once abundant and restrained, has the coolness which the Renaissance recaptured from Greece. This church welcomes one as with an immense smile; it has the sweetness of Christ holding out his hands: "Suffer the little children to come unto me." Intelligence has planned it, but it is the heart that has modeled it.

If we enter Saint-Eustache at nightfall, we could almost believe ourselves in a Gothic building. The Renaissance did not bring about such profound trans-

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formations in architecture as people think. There is a heavy Italian Renaissance element that is altogether alien to us; but in the true French Renaissance the Celtic taste was not betrayed: it was modified with a certain grace and elegance. Grace is an aspect of strength. A nation no more escapes from its racial quality than a man from his temperament. The Celtic mingled with the Roman produced the Romance, out of which the Gothic sprang directly—the Romance, that is to say, the Roman which has passed through the spirit of the Franks. It has the severity, the Roman qualities, united with the imagination of the Barbarians, since we have agreed so to call them. The Romance of the second epoch has already sprung forth; it rises during the eleventh and twelfth centuries and goes to make the Gothic. The Gothic elevates and magnifies the Romance. It detaches the buttresses, even to the point of separating them from the walls, in order to carry them further out to sustain the height of the nave.

As for the Renaissance, it continues the Gothic. We could not have a more striking example of this than just here in Saint-Eustache. Here are the same lines, the same idea, with a different ornamentation. It is the same body, clothed in a new way. It is another age of the Gothic; sweeter, less powerful, the final florescence of the French genius, which, despite the adorable eighteenth century, follows a descending path

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down to the first restoration. Contrary to what has been thought and taught for so long, the Renaissance already marks a stage of decadence. The most beautiful epoch in architecture and sculpture is the Middle Age, an age as beautiful as, perhaps more beautiful than, the great age of Greece, and almost universally despised by our nineteenth century, the century of criticism and pretension, the century of ignorance. Yes, with the Renaissance things begin to give way. And yet to say that is almost a sacrilege! It is as if one struck one's father! Our ravishing Gothic of the sixteenth century has charmed France with its masterpieces; it has made artists cherish a whole country, the sweet country of the Loire. Despite its misalliance with the Italian Renaissance, it stood firm, it did not bend; it remained the grand French style. Witness the Louvre with its high pavilions; that sprang, that too, from the Gothic vein; the sculptors of the Renaissance decorated it less severely, but the general aspect remains the same.

The Gothic under different names has been the main path of our genius during five hundred years. It has been the blessing of France; it was its active principle down to 1820. If we wish to return to art it will only be through comparative study—the comparison with nature of our national style. The beautiful lines are eternal. Why are they used so little?

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### CONCERNING COLOR IN SCULPTURE

The true difference between the Gothic and the Renaissance does not lie in the structure of the building but in the quality of the sculpture and in its color.

What is meant by color in sculpture and in architecture? It is the law of light and shade, the great law of oppositions which constitutes the charm of nature, the beauty of a landscape at dawn, its splendor at sunset. The color springs from the quality of the modeling; it is the relief which gives the light tones and, by contrast, the dark, in the parts that do not stand out. The ensemble of the intermediary diminutions of light and shade produces the general coloring, whose nuances can be infinitely varied according to the skill of the artist. Modeling is the only way in which to express life; and there is only one thing that counts in sculpture and in architecture—the expression of life. A beautiful statue, a well-made monument, live like living beings; they seem different according to the day and the hour. How beautiful it is to give to stone, through nothing but the values of planes, through the handling of shadow and light, the same charm of color as that of living nature, of the flesh of a woman. In the plastic arts, the color betrays the quality of the planes as a beautiful complexion reveals health in a human being.

The antique has shorter planes than the Gothic; it

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lacks therefore those deep shadows that give to the Gothic such a tormented and tragic aspect. The Greek balances the framework of the human body on four planes, the Gothic on two only. The latter produces a stronger effect, a more *hollowed* effect, that *effet de console* which is essentially Gothic. Nevertheless, the shadow that results from it is more sustained than in the antique and nothing could be softer or more full of nuances.

The Roman presents an abundance of dark shadows which, in turn, create an effect of heaviness and density. The Greek puts in just enough of them to quicken the general coloring. The Roman gives a flatter effect, which shows nevertheless a magnificent vigor. As for us, we copy these styles endlessly without understanding them, for if we did understand them we should do quite otherwise. We abuse the black, the powerful lines, we put them everywhere; we do not know how to shade light. That is why our sculpture is so poor, why our monuments appear so hard, so dry. The Bourse, the Corps Législatif, might be made of iron with their columns set against a uniform background which prevents the light and air from circulating about them and enveloping them and destroys the atmosphere. This is what people call a simple style. It is not simple, it is cold. The simple is the perfect, coldness is impotence.

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The Renaissance recaptured the antique measure and imposed its generous color upon the Gothic plane. It used less shadow than our sculptors of the Middle Ages; it diminished the reliefs. The effect in consequence was lighter. This was because the Renaissance was enchanted by all the Greek statues that were discovered at this period; and in its enthusiasm it recreated Greek art, not by copying it, but by copying nature according to antique principles. It is perhaps a little less beautiful but it has quite the same feeling of gentle strength, of delicacy. One feels the joy of the artist who throws himself against the problem of the nude in the open air. Till then statues had been draped, but under the draperies was concealed a carefully studied nude. In the Renaissance the drapery was dropped: the nymphs of Jean Goujon, of Germain Pilon—I recognize them; these long bodies of women, these undulating bodies, are Gothic statues unclothed and set in another light. Our whole sixteenth century is a song of grace rising from the Gothic heart to the art of the Parthenon.

But nowhere than in the country of the Loire is there Renaissance art more gentle and amply luminous. This is the Greek part of France. The tranquil river touched the heart of our architects and bestowed on them some of its calm and smiling majesty. From it, from the air impregnated with its vapors, came those châteaux so happy in their beauty and those lovable

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cottages; for the artist worked as beautifully for peasants as for kings. Before Ussé, before Chenonceaux, Blois, Azay-le-Rideau, I am not in the presence of dead things but of a living spirit, the spirit of divine beauty that animated equally the antique and the Gothic. Charming sixteenth century France, it is you who have forced me to the study of chiaroscuro. Formerly I tried my best to understand your motives, your thousand nerves, but the general law escaped me. I did not see your soul, which consists entirely in the voluptuous shadings of light; I did not perceive your principle, the modeling which impressed movement upon everything and gave the movement life.

## THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The eighteenth century is the exaggeration of the sixteenth. Our elegant houses, our houses in the style of Louis XV and Louis XVI have always the Gothic line with its proud, graceful air. Without moldings, without ornaments, their beauty lies in their very lack of ornaments, in their nudity. But what proportions they have! The finest of the fine!

The eighteenth century is considered too frail, too affected. It is, on the contrary, full of life and strength. It possesses admirable sculptors: Pigalle, creator of that immortal masterpiece, the tomb of Marshal Saxe; Houdon, whose busts to-day are bought for

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their weight in gold without even then bringing their proper price. There were thousands then, the whole rank and file of the trade, who created marvels, with a sureness of hand accustomed to every difficulty. The outline of a table, of a chest, was as much considered as that of a statue. For that matter, what difference did the dimensions of a work make? It was the modeling that counted. The peasant himself sat down in a well-made chair. Artists and artisans had a taste, an alert grace, and a dexterity sufficient to fit out the whole world; but their dexterity was based on a foundation of intelligence as an ornament is based upon a building. The dexterity we possess nowadays is nothing but mockery, a kind of banter that touches everything without discernment; it kills force.

The Louis XV and Louis XVI styles possessed grandeur. We call it the art of the boudoir, but the boudoir of that period had a nobility like that of those white and gold salons where the seats are disposed with dignity like persons of quality. The music had the same character; the dances also, the dances, those charming scenes in which men and women with the natural spirit of play threw themselves into the cadence, translating it with the eloquence of youth. The dance—that was architecture brought to life.

The eighteenth century was a century which *designed*; in this lay its genius. Nowadays people are

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searching for a new style and do not find it. Style comes unawares through the concurrence of many elements; but can we achieve it without design? To-day we design no longer and our art, which is altogether industrial, is bad. The central matter in art is the nude, and this we no longer understand. How can we be expected to have art when we do not understand its central principle? The minor arts are the rays that go out from the center. When I draw the body of a woman I rediscover the form of the beautiful Greek vases. Through design alone we arrive at a knowledge of the shading of forms. The forms that delight us in the art of past centuries are nothing but those presented by living nature, those of human beings, animals, verdure, interpreted by men of supreme taste. The art that people are struggling to discover to-day might be deduced from my sculpture and my drawings, for I have always drawn with passion. The quality of my drawing I owe in large measure to the eighteenth century. I am nothing but a link in the great chain of artists, but I maintain the connection with those of the past. At the Petite Ecole they made us copy the red chalks of Boucher and the models of flowers, animals, and ornaments. They were Louis XVI models, very well executed; they certainly gave me a little of the warmth of the artists of that period. In my youth I made drawings by the hundreds, by the thousands. At

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the Petite Ecole we were badly placed, badly lighted by poor candles; when we touched them we made them sticky with the clay with which our fingers were covered so that they were worse than ever afterwards. It did not matter; we were working according to the right principles.

To-day the Petite Ecole is entirely in the power of the larger school, that of the Beaux-Arts. Far from learning one gets spoiled there for the rest of one's life. One copies the antique, but one copies it badly.

I am speaking with the experience of a genuine artistic life. There was a time when I never talked; to-day I hold forth! If I am understood it will not have been in vain. But how much effort it will take to re-establish truths which are so self-evident, so obvious, so fundamental that one is ashamed to repeat them so many times! Nevertheless they are *essential*. The public is a thousand miles away from them, the public, by which I mean the general taste. If it does not become enlightened, art will disappear. Observe its attitude before the works of the new school, before the pictures of those who call themselves cubists: sarcasm, anger. These artists show us squares, cubes, geometrical figures colored according to their own ideas. They name them: *Portrait of Mme. X.* or *Landscape*. This exasperates the public. What does it matter? Is it good? That is the whole point. Is the ornament well

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treated? That is the capital question, the only one that is not discussed. Their canvases are combinations of color recalling mosaic or even stained glass. We have accepted many other things; we have accepted the green or rather the violet women of our later salons, and women with wooden heads, but we do not wish to admit the squares of the cubists. Why? They are not portraits, we say. They are not landscapes. So much the better! They are something else. What does it matter if the artist has deceived himself knowingly or wilfully on a matter so insignificant as the subject? It is ornamental, that is enough. They are curious, these quarrels that break out, these sects that are created for reasons like this—for a sock put on inside out! Ignorance inflames the passions. There are struggles whose aim is great; others that appear useless have their use perhaps.

It may be that this slackening of taste and knowledge is necessary. Perhaps it is a period of transition, a fallow period required by the intelligence like that required by a soil that has been productive for too long. If ignorance is prolonged it will mean that the history of France is ended; it will mean the annihilation of the Celtic genius which has fertilized Europe for two thousand years. We shall become like Asia. Roman art declined for four or five centuries after Augustus. With us the decadence has only been going on for a

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hundred years. During the present war marvels have been destroyed. Formerly, even during the religious wars, the monuments were spared; it is for this reason that France is still so rich. When stone is no longer respected, it means decadence. The cannon turn up the earth like a plow, leveling everything. This war appears therefore like an explosion of barbarism; at bottom it indicates a latent state of soul which has been shaping itself since the beginning of the nineteenth century. During this period the world has ceased to obey the law of beauty and love; it has lived for nothing but business. What is the leading idea that has precipitated the nations against one another? Trade: the desire, the longing to make more money than one's neighbor. Trade is the anxious care of people who think of nothing but their own petty welfare; it is not the basis on which is founded the grandeur of peoples. It alone regulates at present the relations between things. The war is nothing but the consequence of such habits and their natural conclusion.

Do you ask me what will spring out of the conflict? I am not a prophet. I know only that without religion, without art, without the love of nature—these three words are for me synonymous—men will die of ennui. But nothing easily resigns itself to death. An outburst of courage has just transfigured the world. Can we preserve this courage during peace? The pa-



METAMORPHOSIS ACCORDING TO OVID



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tience of the soldier, the patience of the trenches surpasses in sublimity the virtue of the ancients. Will it produce a rebirth of intelligence? Shall we have, in study, the force of soul that we have had in the great struggle? That is the question. Of course the stupid, the ignorant will not suffer any transformation through the war; but men of character will be reinvigorated by the hardships of the military life; we have recaptured patience and we have yet to learn what we can expect from this virtue. Genius is as much character as talent. If we have men of force in this country where taste is a natural gift, it seems to me impossible that this force will not quicken the gift and develop it and that we shall not have once more an era of beauty.

AUGUSTE RODIN.

## THE WORK OF RODIN

### I

THE STUDY OF THE CATHEDRALS—INFLUENCE OF THE  
GOTHIC ON THE ART OF RODIN—“SAINT JOHN THE  
BAPTIST” (1880)—“THE GATE OF HELL”

**I**N 1877 Rodin visited our most illustrious cathedrals, Rheims, Amiens, Chartres, Soissons, Noyon.

During his youth, the choir of Beauvais and Notre Dame de Paris appealed more to his imagination than to his taste, and it required many years of travel and comparison to enable him to grasp the splendors of that Gothic art which he was to admire thenceforth at least as much as the antique. As a splendidly gifted, but inexperienced young man, he shared the error of his epoch: the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century had despised the Roman and the Gothic; they had ridiculed them and called them barbaric; the nineteenth century, while flattering itself that it appreciated them, did still worse—it restored them.

The romantic writers of the Schools of Châteaubriant and Victor Hugo had exalted the art of the Middle Ages, but chiefly because of their hatred of the classic and without understanding its true worth. What

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struck them, especially, was the immensity and the picturesqueness of the buildings, the luxuriousness of this stone vegetation, but not the unique character of their architecture and sculpture.

Victor Hugo was perhaps one of the few to discover the precise explanation of this beauty: relief and modeling. This all-powerful writer, this architect of words who constructed poems like cathedrals, understood the plastic intelligence of the master masons because he himself possessed the *sense of mass*. One is convinced of this not only in reading his descriptions of cities and monuments, but in studying those astonishing pen-and-ink drawings which he multiplied in idle moments.

If the romanticists have failed fully to explain medieval art to us, let us still be grateful to them: they gave our cathedrals back to us, they denounced ignorance and scourged the stupidity that would have ended by tearing down those sublime piles. Finally if the writers and art critics of this epoch have not given them superlative praise, if on their behalf they have not burned with apostolic zeal, it is because it was necessary for this prophecy of art to come from a man of the craft, a man dominated, captivated, himself, by the craft, a man who understood stone and adored it because he had married it in spirit with all its difficulties and its dazzling possibilities.

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That man was to be Rodin. Although he has been listened to by the ignorant and superficial multitude, it has not been chiefly because of the authority of his genius, of the general renown that he has enjoyed. He has truly thrown a new light over the mystery of Gothic construction. Thanks to him, we understand in a measure, for tangible reasons, the reasons of an actual carver, this "world in little" that constitutes the Gothic cathedrals. What study, what researches are necessary in order to comprehend the art of stonework! Does any one suppose that Rodin himself has attained this in a day? By no means. That lover of perfection in detail does not possess the instantly penetrating glance that is often the property of genius: to the task of deciphering our monuments he brought that slow-minded, customary patience of his, together with his energy. He had first of all to rid himself of the false current ideas. After that thirty years of observation were necessary for him to reach conclusions that satisfied his artistic conscience. Even to-day he is far from affirming that he has understood everything, that he has grasped the full significance of the Gothics. Read his book, "The Cathedrals of France," published in 1914; observe the carefulness of his judgments, the gropings of his thought, the constant retracing of his steps. He makes attempts, ventures; he never proclaims his opinion in the peremptory tone dear to

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specialists in criticism, but endeavors to approach respectfully, as closely as possible, to the spirit of the masters. Sometimes a flash of genius springs from his brain and illuminates to the depths of its mysteries the Gothic universe; but nothing is suggested that does not spring from a prolonged observation, and when at last he speaks it is in the tone of a man who mistrusts himself. It must be confessed that in this work, "The Cathedrals of France," something is lacking, even though it is prefaced by a long and very learned introduction by one of our good writers, Charles Morice. It lacks the magnificent lesson that the reader will find in these pages, signed with Rodin's name. This lesson constitutes really a vital page that is, as it were, the key and the summary of the whole work; but the master, having given me the first rights in it, had scruples, as had Charles Morice, about including it in his own book.

Before obtaining this page, with what insistence did I have to question Rodin not once, not twice, but twenty times, during the course of a number of years. Every time he came back from one of his pilgrimages to some old city of the provinces, to our churches, our town halls, I renewed my questions without receiving any satisfactory answer. In my heart I could not but honor this rigorous honesty which was unwilling to venture anything lightly on so vast, so noble a subject.

In 1877, after having accomplished his first tour of

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France, he came back filled with wonder. But the impression that he carried with him was still confused; he did not know at what point to begin the analytical study of French architecture, for in what concerned sculpture he had immediately been struck with amazement and adoration before the essential beauty of the status of Chartres, Amiens, and Rheims. He had returned from Italy haunted by the antique and Michelangelo, and now here he was haunted by the modeling and the rhythm of the Gothic figures.

But in order to understand them entirely he had to rediscover this modeling and these movements in nature, he had to verify them in the living model. Fortune favors those who seek greatly. When one is the victim of an idea unexpected elements arise to nourish and develop it. One day two Italians knocked at the door of his studio. One of them, a professional model, had already posed for Rodin and he introduced the other, his comrade. He was a peasant from the Abruzzi who had come to seek his fortune in Paris. He was fresh from his native province. His robust body, his fierce head, his bristling beard and hair, and above all his expression of indomitable force charmed the artist. He undressed, climbed upon the model's stand, planted himself firmly on his legs, which were spread like a compass, the head well raised, and, continuing to talk, advanced with a gesture full of ardor.

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Rodin, struck by this wild energy, immediately set to work. He made the man such as he saw him; he desired to capture this movement of the legs, this brisk forward movement that complemented the movement of the arms, the shining eyes, the open mouth. He surrendered himself to a great study, without any preconceived idea, without any intention of treating a *subject*. What he made was *a man walking*. The name has stuck to the figure. The first study remains incomplete; Rodin has sculptured neither the head nor the arms; what he sought eagerly, passionately, was the equilibrium of the torso and of the legs cast forward into space. He succeeded; he made a superb fragment, "The Man Walking." Thirty years later it occurred to a group of his admirers to ask the state to acquire this study and erect it in the court of the French embassy at Rome, in the Farnese Palace; but the official architects up to the present time have objected to the erection of this statue, and for the last seven or eight years it has awaited, in some obscure shed, the good pleasure of these gentlemen.

Rodin, in the presence of his Italian peasant, had rediscovered, to his great joy as a seeker, the peculiar equipoise of the Gothic figures. In the antique statues the plumb-line falls through one of the legs, while the other, lightly raised, impresses on the different planes of the body the graceful effect that has become classic.

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In Gothic statues, on the contrary, the line of equilibrium passes through the middle of the body and falls right between the two legs as they are planted on the earth.

In "The Age of Bronze" Rodin has adopted the balanced rhythm of Greek sculpture; in his new figure he passed to the Gothic equipoise, with a harmony that is less gracious, but with a reality stronger and more living. What he did not abandon was the rigorous construction and the strength of modeling which his study of the antique had given him. "The Man Walking," as well as the greater part of his subsequent works, thus exhibits the union of the two great principles of sculpture that have governed the Occidental genius.

Rodin, strengthened by study, now made a complete statue with head and arms. While he was working he discovered that his model was half a savage, still close to the animal and its ferocious instincts. Sometimes his eyes burned, his jaws, armed with powerful teeth, were thrust forward as if to bite something; he resembled a wolf. At other times a kind of strange passion inflamed him. His face radiated faith and will; he spoke with such energy that he seemed to be haranguing a crowd; one would have thought him a prophet of the primitive ages, a visionary bursting forth from the desert to preach and to convert the people.



EVE



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Rodin regarded him in amazement. It was no longer his model, but a man from the Bible; surely it was a prophet that stood before him: it was Saint John the Baptist brought back to life. The sculptor bowed before the command of nature: his statue should bear the name of the forerunner.

He thought at first of emphasizing the disturbing impression: he placed on the shoulders of Saint John a simple cross. But here was revealed the all-powerful instinct of the sculptor, making the subject, the anecdote, the literary connotation a matter of secondary importance. The cross, the sublime symbol, would be here only an accessory, not really needed. It would complicate the simplicity of line dictated by the laws of sculpture, destroying the appositions of equilibrium of the great body and distracting the attention from that speaking head.

So Rodin gave it up. He came at last to the decision that his work should remain free from what was not of the very essence of art. He sent it off in the form in which it appeared in the Salon of 1880, adding also "The Age of Bronze."

The artists, the true artists, those whose enthusiasm was not poisoned by envy and jealousy, applauded these two superb figures artistically so different, but so similar in their sincerity; they acclaimed them with the grave joy of generous souls who perceive the dawn

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of a great talent. The name of Rodin became fixed forever in their memory.

As for the jury of this Salon, it considered it sufficient to award the "Saint John the Baptist" and "The Age of Bronze" a medal *of the third class*. Let us, in turn, give it our reward—the reward for its insensitivity—by not disclosing the names of the sages who composed it.

### "THE GATE OF HELL"

While finishing these works, which he was not even certain of being able to sell, Rodin was still compelled to provide for his own subsistence and that of his family; he had also to meet the expenses of his trade. A costly trade! It requires a studio, models, large fires to keep them warm, clay, tools of every kind. It was luck enough if the sculptor, still unknown, was able to have plaster casts made of his work. But this did not satisfy him; he dreamed of seeing them take on a new aspect in the richness of marble and bronze. Alas! in many cases he had to wait until middle age to have this dream realized. Rodin has never complained of the slowness of fortune. He knows that in order to attain the fullness of his productive power it is well for the artist to be thwarted, exalted by difficulties, the desire to conquer. After a five-years' stay in Belgium he had returned to Paris to take part in the work of

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the World Exposition of 1878, and he had taken a position with the ornament-worker Legrain, in whose workshop he met Jules Desbois, the future great sculptor, to whom he became attached for life. What innumerable decorations he executed at that time—decorations which disappeared like the leaves and flowers of the season when the stucco palaces of the exposition vanished! Only the masks ornamenting the Palais du Trocadéro remained.

At the same time he accumulated busts, studies, large figures with a fury of work which from then on was to resemble that of the most powerfully productive minds, the fecundity of a Rubens, of a Balzac, of a Michelet, of a Hugo. In the studios which he rented in the Faubourg St. Jacques, from 1877 to 1883, besides the "Saint John the Baptist," he executed the admirable little rough model of the "Monument Commemorating the National Defense"; after his wife, whose characterful features and naturally tragic countenance he had often reproduced, he made a helmeted bust, a "Bellona." He exhibited three life-sized figures: "The Creation of Man"; "Adam," since destroyed; and "Eve," the bronze of which did not appear until the Salon of 1899. He did the busts of W. E. Henley; the painter Jean-Paul Laurens (to mention some of the most beautiful), Carrier-Belleuse, the etcher Alphonse Legros, all in the midst of difficulties and injustices

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which did not in any way disturb the depths of his serenity, the noble tranquillity of the artisan sure of attaining his end by labor. Is it possible to-day to believe that the model of the “Monument of the Defense” was not only refused, but was not even classed among the thirty designs that were retained by the jury of 1880 after the first choice had been made? This same jury, the composition of which is also worthy of passing into history, decided on a solemn confection by M. Barrias for the *prix de Rome*, the result of which was that four years later its creator was elected a member of the Academy of Fine Arts.

I do not know whether many collectors contend for reproductions of M. Barrias’s monstrous design for a clock; but Rodin’s group, a wounded soldier entirely enveloped by the wings of a prodigious figure of a warrior goddess crying out for aid, which was later renamed “The Genius of the Defense” or “The Appeal to Arms,” and which has acquired to-day so pathetic a character of actuality, is coveted by most of the museums and art collectors of Europe and America.

As if these works, which have since acquired such glory, were nothing but fragments of secondary importance, Rodin attacked a great piece of work, like those that used to be executed in the great ages of art: he undertook the famous “Gate of Hell.”

At the time of the affair of “The Age of Bronze” there

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was at the head of the ministry of fine arts, an under-secretary of state named Edmond Turquet. To him fell the task of deciding in the last resort the case of Rodin. M. Edmond Turquet was a brilliant lawyer who had become *procureur* under the empire, which did not altogether qualify him for the part of director of fine arts under the republic. In the field of art he knew no more than any one else, Rodin says; but he was a very fair-minded man, and his honesty had the effect of quickly straightening out the affair of the sculptor. In his genuine desire to atone for the wrong done to Rodin in the eyes of public opinion he not only offered to obtain for him a position in the porcelain factory at Sèvres, in order to assure him a regular livelihood, but ordered from him a great ornamental piece, a door destined for the Palais des Arts Décoratifs. In addition, by a special privilege created in favor of artists under Louis XIV,—a privilege the traditions of which the French Government has happily perpetuated,—M. Turquet granted Rodin a good studio in the Dépôt des Marbres, so that he could execute his order.

“And what will you represent on that door?” enquired the under-secretary of state.

“I am sure I don’t know,” replied the artist. “But I shall make a quantity of little figures; then no one will say that they are casts taken from the life.”

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Thus we find him at Sèvres, a ceramist; he has carried on so many different trades that he succeeds marvelously with this one. It was his task to decorate vases of delicate clay; he modeled light bas-reliefs, representations of mythological scenes, idylls. Nymphs, cupids, fauns, evoked by his miraculously delicate fingers, were born out of the milky, transparent material, bringing back to life the flowery graces of the drawing-room art of the eighteenth century, the dainty elegances of the wax figures of Clodion, but with a graver sense of the mystery of nature and of love.

Unfortunately, when these vases left the hand of the master they were overladen with hideous ornaments in the style of Louis-Philippe. Moreover, the officials at the head of the factory did not like them. They were carried up to the attics, they were left lying about on the floor, in the secret hope of seeing them broken by the feet of some careless or ill-willed workman.

The feeling of being isolated and misunderstood at times threw a shadow over the soul of the sculptor; but on the other hand he felt himself so strong, so solidly based in his will, in his self-confidence, and in the virtue of labor that these moments of depression passed away quickly. Besides, he knew the secret of the poor, the secret of creating happiness for oneself out of everything that the rich and powerful despise: a simple

## THE WORK OF RODIN

life, health, regular work, the contemplation of nature, and a few real friendships. Rodin earned at Sèvres only two or three francs an hour and lost a great deal of time on the railroad. What did it matter? He found pleasure and rest in these little journeys. Every day he set out from Paris by train, and, the day over, winter and summer, his wife came to meet him. They returned together on foot either along the banks of the Seine, charming in their profusion of little hills and islands, covered with meadows or fine trees, or through the woods of Meudon and Clamart, with their vistas of Paris, its heights, its buildings, its changing sky full of light and spirit.

At the end of four years of opposition and annoyance Rodin gave up pottery in order to consecrate himself wholly to his own work. The museum of the factory preserves a vase signed by him, and the future Musée de l'Hôtel Biron can show a second example. What has become of the others? What price would not be paid for them to-day by admirers of the master?

These supplementary works did not turn him away from his essential task; whatever were the technical means employed, his efforts tended toward one unique end, the plastic quality, and he gave himself up desperately to this search in executing his new order, the "Gate."

Rising at four in the morning, as he had done in his

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

youth, he studied the plans and the details of this great work. He had announced a series of little figures. How was he to group them? What visions surged in the sculptor's imagination? Of what legendary theme, what theme of history or poetry, should he make use in order to realize his program? He had never ceased to be a passionate reader. He read especially the Greek poets and dramatists, the Roman historians, the old French chronicles, Dante, Shakspere, Victor Hugo, and Baudelaire. He did not wish to draw the subject of his future work from Homer, *Æschylus* or Sophocles; the School of the Beaux-Arts had so abused the theme of the antique, already immortalized by Greek sculptors, that it had entirely lost its freshness. The moderns attracted him less, but he was obsessed by the work of the great poet of the Renaissance, by the "Divine Comedy" of Dante. He had read and re-read it and made a sort of commentary in the form of innumerable sketches which he jotted down mornings and evenings at table, while walking, stopping by the wayside to dash off attitudes and gestures on the leaves of his note-book. He rediscovered in the poem of Dante the fateful grandeur of the Greek dramas, but with an atmosphere more modern, closer to ourselves, more mournfully familiar to our anguishes and our torments. The idea took shape in his imagination, "that imagination ceaselessly rumbling and groaning



RODIN AT WORK ON THE MARBLE



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like a forge"; it exalted his bold spirit. Genius joins to the richness of the intellect the simplicity of heart that creates faith. Genius *believes* ever more than it *thinks*. It has the strength which succeeds in anything, and it possesses also that supreme gift, the ingenuousness of the child who doubts nothing. Rodin believed the poem of Dante as if he had lived it, as Dante himself believed in Vergil. What a magnificent homage great men render to one another in this credulity of genius toward genius!

The subject chosen by Rodin for his decorative panels, then, was hell—hell as Dante conceived it in a vision that lends itself, for that matter, marvelously to a plastic realization. The "Gate" would be a poem, an immense sculptured poem; that is to say, a résumé of the attitudes and gestures of life called forth by the release of the passions, a strange catalogue of the expressions of the human body under the shock of sorrow and of joy. If the imagination of Rodin caught fire like that of a visionary, he remained beyond everything and above everything the sculptor, and he plunged immediately into the search for the general scheme of the work.

The truth of the movements, the poetry of the evocations, his models would give him; he could feel at ease as to that: the resources that nature would offer him were inexhaustible. But the plan, that he must

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

find himself; he must do the work of the builder, almost of the geometrician. There could be no self-deception as to that. The fuller the ornamentation was to be of figures and movements, the more solid must be the frame of the immense picture, the more vigorous and compact must be the general plan of the work.

Rodin's mind wavered between two great schools, that of the Renaissance and that of the Middle Ages, that which had produced the doors of the baptistry at Florence and that to which we owe the portals of the Gothic cathedrals.

The celebrated gates of Florence are a series of bas-reliefs arranged symmetrically in a regular framework; they present a series of separate pictures having no common bond except their subject. The execution is admirable, and it is perhaps impossible to surpass it. Lorenzo Ghiberti has done there the work of an incomparable modeler, actually a goldsmith; but he has in no way troubled himself with regard to architecture. Now, architecture is the great French point of view. The Roman and the Gothic have placed in their monument (the church) that other monument (the portal). The portal is complete in itself; the art of the sculptor and that of the architect have united and become indistinguishable here in order to realize an absolute beauty.

Rodin, profoundly French, inheriting the instinct

## THE WORK OF RODIN

and taste of his ancestors the master-masons, having to compose a door, was fated to conceive a portal. On the other hand, he could not escape the influence of the antique, the result of his early studies. This was the entirely different element which in the course of the work he had undertaken was to mingle with the Gothic element.

It was not the first time that the mingling of these two great conceptions of art had occurred in France. From it had sprung our Renaissance sculpture; in that epoch the sculpture of the Greeks united itself with the Gothic architecture, the Hellenic sunlight brought to blossom the majesty of our monuments. Does not Rodin himself, with his vast outlook over the whole field of art, call this period of national art, the sixteenth century, the French Gothic?

“The Gate of Hell,” then, took on in its general structure a Renaissance aspect. It preserves the graceful line of the Gothic portal and has the luminous whiteness inspired by Greek sculpture. This singular work has touched all contemporary artists. Most of our writers have described it, and, after them, the critics of other countries. This living multitude, this suffering, groaning multitude that covers the two panels with a thousand passionate movements, has drawn into its magic whirlpool the world of literature, which has been able to liberate itself only by means of

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

innumerable printed pages. The poem of Dante has come forth as it were revivified from the hands of Rodin. Fresh tears, one would say, have bathed the most poignant passages; the pity of a man of to-day, of one like ourselves, our brother, has enveloped the terrible work of the Florentine poet, that man of the Middle Ages, with an atmosphere of tenderness and compassion which seems the emotion of Christianity at its purest, its original source. In order to become our own, it has passed through the great soul of Rodin. It is not surprising, then, that the sensibility of our artists, reanimated by this new spectacle, should be touched to so voluminous an expression by this haunting work.

But what has not been sufficiently remarked is that the "Gate" is, above everything, a piece of architecture of the highest order.

When we see it we are at once struck with an impression of majesty, of calm strength and plenitude. It seems even longer than it actually is. It is a rectangle six meters high and two and a half meters wide, but the source of the illusion is the justness of the proportions and the value of the masses.

The powerful frame is furrowed with deep depressions. It rests on the ground upon a strong base from which rise the two door-posts, as robust as pillars and mounting together toward the summit. A pediment in the shape of an entablature overhangs the entire

## THE WORK OF RODIN

monument, casting over it a deep shadow full of nuances; and it is this shadow, skilfully graduated, that gives to the work its rich, soft color. The body of the portal is divided into two panels; a vast tympanum surmounts them transversally. This tympanum, surmounted by a large cornice, dominates the work. Without weighing it down, it gives it its mass, it attracts, it possesses, the eye; it is the soul of the edifice, its intellect. No word can more justly describe it than the word brow, for it is magnetic, haunting, mysterious, like the forehead of a man of genius.

The panels sink deep into a shadow that is heavy, but not harsh, while in the foreground the pillars advance into the light; the delicate bas-reliefs that cover them keep them in a silvery atmosphere, the source of the great softness which envelopes this work, otherwise severe and tragic, the source of the fugitive lightness of the lines, which strike up from the earth toward the somber and tormented upper regions.

Carried away by this marvelous technic, the spirit of the visitor succumbs; it follows this ascending movement of the door-posts, to lose itself in the sorrowful dream sculptured on the tympanum.

On the panel writhe the clusters of human figures, the eddies of the multitude of damned souls pursued by the rage of the elements, by the devouring tongues of the infernal fire, by the frozen waters, by the wind that

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

tears them and stings them. "It is," says the eminent art critic Gustave Jeffroy, in the most beautiful pages that have been consecrated to a description of this work, "the dizzy whirl, the falling through space, the groveling on the face of the earth of a whole wretched humanity obstinately persisting in living and suffering, bruised and wounded in its flesh, saddened in its soul, crying aloud its griefs, harshly laughing through its tears, chanting its breathless fears, its sickly joys, its ecstatic sorrows."

The genius of Rodin became intoxicated with all the resources of his art. Master of a technic of the first order, he delighted in every kind of effect, arranging them as a great symphonist arranges the instruments of an immense orchestra. Low-relief, half-relief, high-relief, and sculpture in the round, he omitted none. He did not yield to the literary temptation. At the height of his fever of invention he was circumspect, measured, guided by his knowledge as a modeler. The poet thinks, but the carver speaks; he speaks justly, he speaks admirably, because he uses only his own true and personal language, which he knows from the ground up. That is the whole secret of the way in which this man inflames our soul and subjugates our imagination.

Two principal notes, two motives form, above the whirlwind of the infernal fires, a resting-place for the

## THE WORK OF RODIN

eye troubled by so much vehemence: one, in the midst of the tympanum, is the figure of Dante. It is Dante, but it is even more the eternal poet. Seated, leaning over the abyss of suffering, thrilled with anguish, he seems to seek in the very depths of the pit itself the word of infinite pity that will deliver this sorrowful humanity.

Higher yet, above his bowed head, rising suddenly from the frame and splayed in a large protuberance, a group of three entwined figures crowns and completes the brow. With the same despairing gesture they point to the multitude of the damned. One does not know what these shuddering beings are, but they have the sweetness of angels; at once we seem to hear their lips murmur the words of the grand Florentine, "*Lasciate ogni speranza*"; but across their forms, their compassionate forms, their fraternal forms, one feels passing a tremor of love and pity. Far from condemning, their clasped hands offer to the sad wreckage of fatality that writhes at their feet a sign, a unique sign, the sign of good-will of pity.

"The Gate of Hell" was shown only once to the public. This was at the Universal Exposition of 1900. Although it was nearly finished, it was seen then only in an incomplete state.

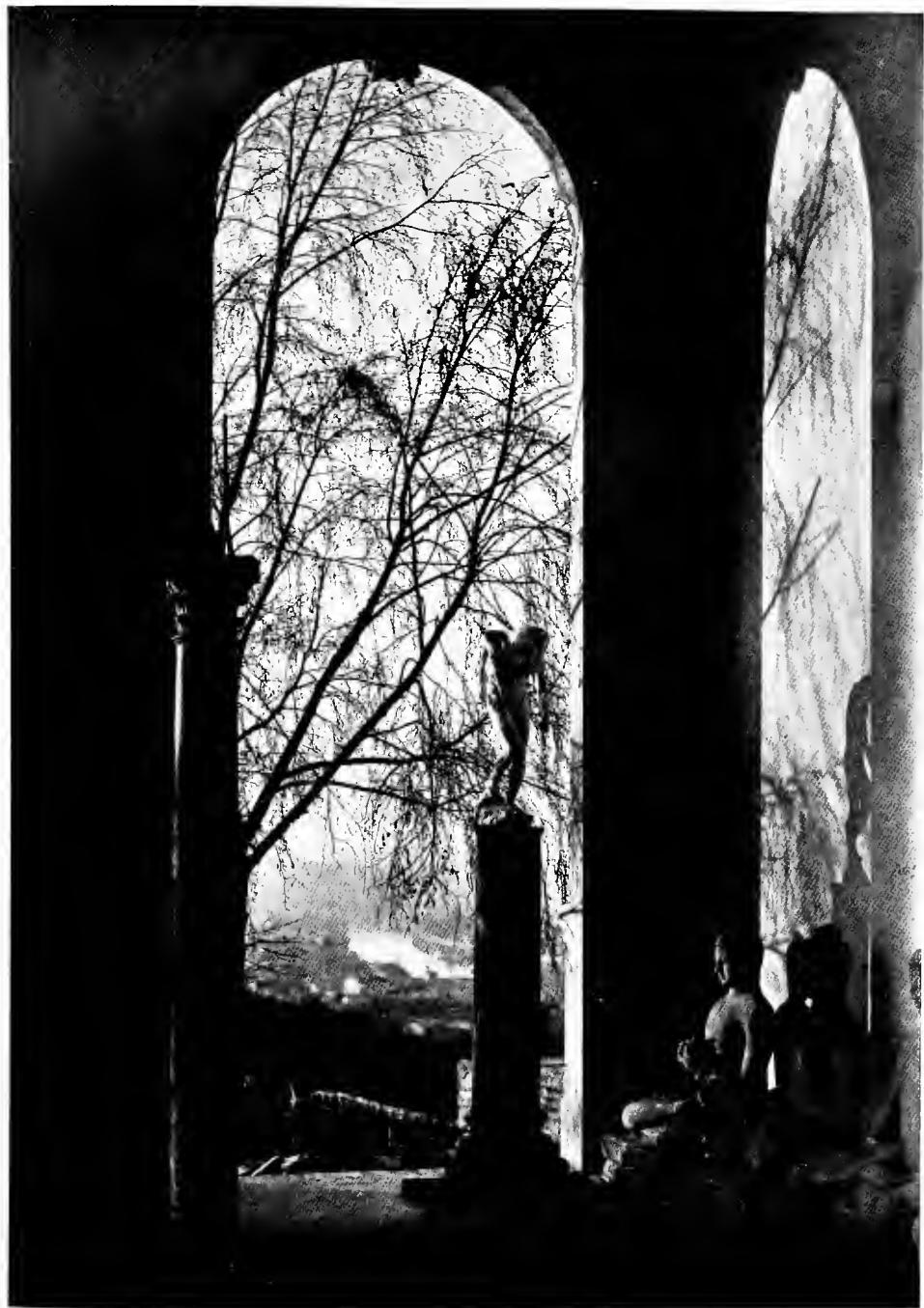
## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

The day of the opening arrived before the master had been able to have placed on the *fronton* and on the panels of his monument the hundreds of great and small figures destined for their ornamentation. People saw the "Gate," then in the nudity of its construction, grandiose assuredly, but despoiled of its extraordinary raiment of sculpture.

That day was a sad one for the true friends of art and of Rodin. A band of snobs, full of their own importance, crowded about the great man. Having considered the work with the hasty and casual glance of men of the world of the sort that are concerned above all to get themselves noticed, they remarked to Rodin, in a tone of augury, "Your doorway is much more beautiful like that; in no circumstances do anything more to it."

This absurd advice befell at an evil moment: the artist felt worn out from overwork and anxieties of all kinds and, moreover, was troubled over the fate of his exhibit the failure of which might in truth have ruined him completely. In these circumstances he did not have the freedom of spirit necessary to judge correctly the value of his own work. And besides he had seen it too much during the twenty years in which it had been before his eyes. He was tired of it, weary of it.

Thus everything combined to make him lend an ear to the unfavorable opinions of the Parisian aviary.



PERISTYLE OF THE STUDIO AT MEUDON



## THE WORK OF RODIN

Had he been in better health, more the master of himself physically and morally, he would have replied to the prattling of these excited paroquets and guineahens:

“Take more room, examine my ‘Gate’ from a little farther off, and you will see once more the effect of the whole—the effect of unity which charms you when it is deprived of its ornamentation. You must understand that my sculpture is so calculated as to melt into the principal masses. For that matter, it completes them by modeling them into the light. The essential designs are there: it is possible that in the course of the final work I may find it necessary to diminish such or such a projection, to fill out such or such a pool of shadow; nevertheless, leave this difficulty to my fifty years of artisanship and experience, and you may be sure that quite by myself I shall find the best way of finishing my work.”

But the master was silent. Later, carried away by the abundance of his conceptions, by his ever-deepening researches, he lost all interest in the “Gate” and has never taken the trouble to have it entirely mounted.

Fortunately, casts of it have been carefully preserved. It would be only an affair of a few months to reconstruct the work in its original integrity. Since the Universal Exposition time has rolled forward, and events also. Auguste Rodin has entered into the great

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serenity which age brings with it. He composes less, he corrects his work, he judges himself, and he does not deny his "Gate," one of the most exceptional of his works.

At last the creation of the Musée Rodin has been decided upon by the state. "The Gate of Hell" will be one of its important pieces; we shall be able to contemplate it then in all its majesty; it will not then simply be molded in plaster, but cast in bronze and cut in marble. It will offer a noble example of what work can accomplish when it is served by that supreme gift, will; for it will testify as much to resistance against the powerful enemies of the life of thought as to the intelligence of the man who created it. It forces upon us not only a formidable impression of strength, labor, talent, but also an impression no less lofty of method, order, and inner harmony. The multitude, who through their profound instincts approach much closer than one might suppose to the man of genius, will exclaim in contemplating this work, this true monument which undoubtedly the sculptor has raised through his own force of character, "Whoever erected this beautiful thing with his indefatigable hands was truly a man."

## II

### “THE BURGHERS OF CALAIS” (1889)—RODIN AND VICTOR HUGO—THE STATUE OF BALZAC (1898)

**A**T the time the plaster model of “The Burghers of Calais” was first offered to the judgment of the public, in 1889, nearly seven years had gone by since Rodin had originally undertaken the group.

This is the period of my own childish memories of the master. He was a frequent visitor at the home of my father, who lived in Sèvres, on the outskirts of Paris.

Rodin, with his silent nature, apparently so full of calm and meditation, delighted in the ardor, the patriotic enthusiasm, the ferment of character, the brilliant conversation of that powerful, original writer, my father; he loved his books, too, spirited and passionate like himself, and possessing a vigor of expression that was new to French letters.

Léon Cladel received his friends on Sundays. In winter they gathered in the drawing-room, in summer on a terrace shaded by great chestnuts and limes, where thousands of birds twittered and chattered so ener-

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getically that at dusk they ended by drowning the voices of the visitors. Among the latter were writers, painters, and sculptors, several of whom have since become famous. Among them were Auguste Rodin and his colleague, his dear comrade, Jules Dalou, creator of many fine works, notably the monument to Eugène Delacroix which stands in the Luxembourg Gardens.

The sculptor of "The Burghers of Calais" was then barely fifty. He was far from possessing the immense fame that is his to-day, but artists already regarded him as a master. Of medium height, robust, with large shoulders and heavy limbs, placid and deliberate in appearance, never gesticulating, he himself resembled a block of stone; but above this heavy base his countenance, with its broadly designed features and its gray-blue eyes, expressed an extraordinarily keen intelligence and finesse. Despite my youth I was struck by this physiognomy, so singular and so penetrating, and also by the remarkable shyness that made the sculptor blush whenever he was addressed. Since then innumerable portraits have familiarized people with these features, which with age have settled into an expression of authority and firm will; his strange timidity has disappeared with time, with the consciousness of his strength, with his having become accustomed to glory. Moreover, Rodin has become a





STATUE OF BASTIEN-LEPAGE

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ready talker. Of old he listened intently, but always held his peace; at most a few words, spoken in a soft, clear voice, escaped from the waves of his long beard. He would at once relapse into silence, while with a slow movement giving his beard an instinctive caress with his large, square, irresistible hand, the true hand of a builder. But when he raised his eyelids, almost always lowered, the transparent eye, that limpid gray-blue eye, betrayed a perspicacity that was almost malicious, almost cunning: one felt that he penetrated through the forms of people to their very souls; and this he fixed so skilfully in the clay of his busts that his models were not always pleased with it. Many of Rodin's portraits have been refused by sitters offended by their pitiless realism.

Sometimes my father kept Rodin and Jules Dalou to dinner. The two sculptors were devoted to each other. They were comrades from of old who had traveled together the hard road of beginners; since their student days at the Petite Ecole they had many times reëncountered each other in the same workshops, where they had received the same contemptuous wages for their long days of labor. They felt a profound esteem for each other's talent, different as these talents were, altogether opposed, in fact, as were their natures; and it was a fine, a lovely thing to see them bring forward each other's respective merits. Alas!

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I shall have to tell later how an artistic rivalry came one day to destroy this noble friendship.

The appearance of "The Burghers of Calais" aroused a flood of enthusiasm in the world of art. I remember it well. At that time I was only a young school-girl, and my father was unwilling to allow me to "miss my classes" in order to accompany him to the opening of the Rodin Exhibition. After all, the lessons I received that day, following them quite absent-mindedly, were they worth the lesson I should have received from the contemplation of that masterpiece, even if my age would have prevented me from quite understanding it? Beauty is always the most fertilizing teacher.

A rich art-lover, acting with the municipal authorities of Calais, had ordered from Rodin the statue of Eustache de Saint-Pierre, the Calais hero whose devotion had in the fourteenth century, during the Hundred Years' War, saved the city when it was besieged by King Edward III of England.

Rodin, true to his principles, sought as ever to approach his subject from the quick of reality. He consulted history. He read the old chronicles of France, above all those of Jean Froissart, who was contemporaneous with the event and almost a witness of it. Froissart was a man of the fourteenth century, a man of the age of the cathedrals, and therefore himself a

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Gothic. His narrative has the force, the savor, the naïveté, the simple and profound art of the masters of that marvelous epoch. What a source of emotion for Rodin, a Gothic likewise in his faith and his artistic rectitude! He caught fire at the recital of the old master as at the voice of a brother-in-arms. He read, he learned that Edward III would not consent to spare the city of Calais from pillage and destruction unless six of her richest citizens would come out to him dressed only in their shirts, barefoot, with ropes about their necks, bringing him the keys of the city and their own heads to be cut off. In response to this terrible message, Eustache de Saint-Pierre and five of his fellow-citizens, taking counsel with the notables of the place, at once rose to go to the king's camp. They set forth immediately, escorted on their way by the hunger-stricken multitude, weeping and groaning over their sacrifice and "adoring them with pity."

This was the vision which from that time on took possession of Rodin, dominating him and never leaving him. But it was not an isolated person detached from his environment that he saw: it was the six martyrs just as they appeared in history, just as they were in life. In his thought he followed this band of heroes marching to the sacrifice in the midst of the weeping city. He could not bring himself to separate them either from their whole number or from their

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tragic surroundings. Therefore, in accordance with the genius of his theme, that is to say, with historic truth, he would make all six of them, and he would insist that they should be set up in the midst of the city, among the old houses, where they would continue to live their sublime life in the heart of the very town that they had saved.

For the price of one statue, therefore, Rodin set out to execute six. He rented a vast atelier in the rue des Fourneaux, in the Vaugirard Quarter. He worked unceasingly. To keep this enormous group in good condition, to maintain the proper temperature, he moistened the clay morning and evening, having as his *garçon d'atelier* no one but his devoted wife, who had become thoroughly experienced in these matters. Despite all, accidents would happen: the clay would give way, an arm, modeled with his habitual exactitude, would fall and have to be laboriously repaired; but the fervent modeler never hesitated in his work, and on the day when he exhibited "The Burghers of Calais" at the house of Georges Petit the praise and the homage that sprang forth from the soul of all true artists recompensed him magnificently, bringing him the intoxicating caress of dawning glory. They spoke, in connection with the "Burghers," of the image-makers of our cathedrals; they spoke of the statues of Claus Sluters, of the famous statues of the "Well of Moses"

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at Dijon. Really, in the Calais monument Rodin is more than ever under the Gothic influence in subject, in thought, and in execution. The equilibrium of the figures composing the group is the same as that of the "Saint John the Baptist." The long shifts that cover the naked bodies of his heroes recall those draperies in vertical folds dear to the Middle Ages. The very modeling of the figures and of the faces increases this effect of elongation caused by the fall of the fabric; the modeling in large planes, the vigorous accents, the simple and pathetic movements are certainly those of the sort that out-of-door sculpture calls for. In twenty years Rodin had made innumerable visits to the Gothic monuments. Here was the result of his tours of France. He had made them in order to recapture the traditions of art from the hands of our wonderful old stone-cutters, and his heart must have throbbed with joy when he was told that in his own hands that tradition had suffered no loss.

Naturally, the appearance of "The Burghers of Calais," even that, could not fail to have its share of comic anecdote, that bitter and painful humor that marks the adventures of genius in its struggle with vulgarity. Let us not complain too much. The contrast between these adventures and the proud way of life of a great man, the regularity of his hours of toil—it is this that creates opposition, movement, life. The

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elect soul feels a savage joy in these blows which shake it like a tree tormented by brutal hands, a tree aware of the vigor of its resistance and its ever-increasing tenacity.

The municipality of Calais, hearing that there were to be six statues instead of the one that had been ordered, took umbrage, and deliberated for two years. The heroic group waited, and, as it encumbered Rodin's atelier, where other works were going forward, it was placed in a stable. At last the worthy town authorities decided to assign it a site. Naturally, the site in question was exactly opposed to the ideas of the master—ideas that had been thought out and that were perfectly logical, based on the laws of decorative art and still more determined by that infallible criterion, taste. Rodin desired that his monument should be in the center of the town; they placed it on the edge of the sea. He counted on emphasizing the tall stature of his figures by enshrining it in the narrow frame of the houses; they placed it against a horizon without limits. He requested that the group should be placed very low, almost on the ground, or else very high on an elevated pedestal, like the "Colleoni" at Venice or the "Gattamelata" at Padua; they placed it at a middle height, thus diminishing the effect of its imposing proportions. The lesson had to come from foreign lands. The city of Antwerp has erected, in front of its museum of fine

## THE WORK OF RODIN

arts, two of the statues of the celebrated group, and England, which does things splendidly when it is a question of embellishing its cities or of rendering homage to the valor of its adversaries, has erected the effigies of the six heroes of Calais on one of the most beautiful sites in London, before the Palace of Westminster.

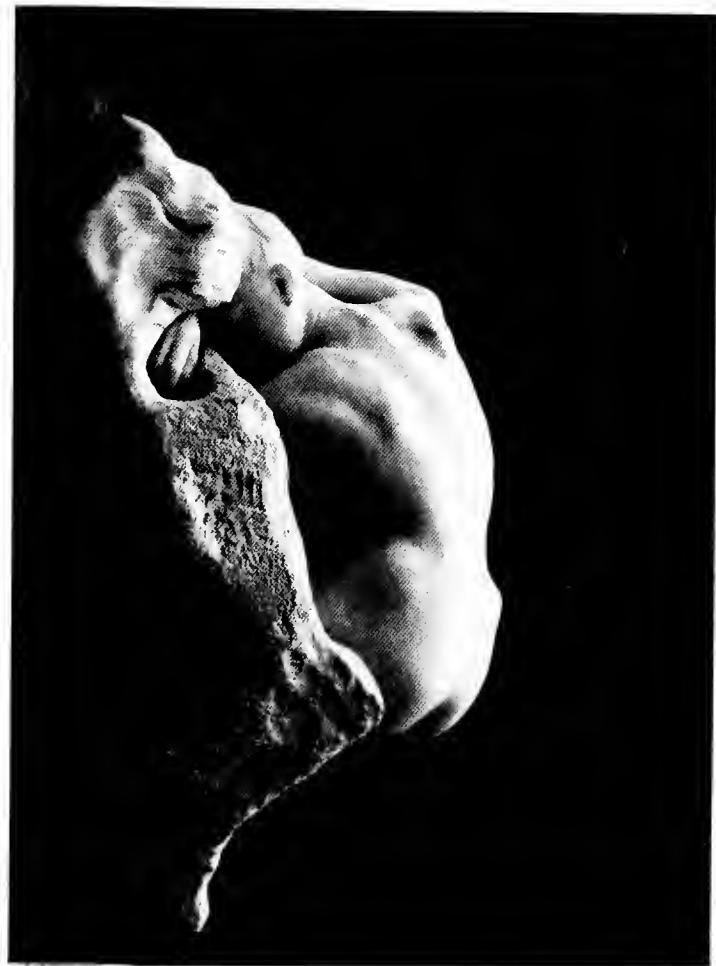
By this time the reader is sufficiently familiar with the technic of Rodin for it to be unnecessary to analyze here in detail this well-known work. What must not be forgotten is that the sculptor had first modeled these six powerful bodies entirely in the nude. This is his invariable method when he executes draped figures. One realizes this, even without knowing it, before these arms, these hands, these legs, and these feet constructed with that rigorous conscience which, with the true artist, is at once a necessity and a delight; one divines the slope of the torsos bent with grief or rigid in the pride of sacrifice.

“Yes, they are beautiful,” the master said to me one day when I was talking with him. “The shirt, the blouse are garments the folds of which yield simple planes and effects that, rightly rendered, are those of true sculpture. But there is something better still, and that is sackcloth. If I had clothed my ‘Burghers of

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

Calais' in sackcloth, they would certainly be more beautiful. I did not dare to. Some one else will do this and will succeed. It is sufficient to express an idea and leave it to its destiny."

We ought to love in Rodin this intellectual vigor that skirts the borders of the impossible. In our age, consumed with indecision, it is a priceless aid, a resting-place, a *point d'appui* from which one starts forth afresh, fortified, one's nerves recharged with vitality, to the conquest of one's share of knowledge or of talent. This accounts in part for the irresistible influence which for thirty years the illustrious sculptor has exercised over the minds of artists. One feels that this fount of strength condensed in his virile soul comes from something deeper than his personality alone; it comes from the very depths of the national reserves. The conviction, the energy of Rodin are those of the workman who knows his trade, of the laborer impassioned by the culture of his own soil. This endurance is the foundation of the French temperament; the events happening now have proved it. When a country possesses such individualities through the course of history, the roads of the future open out before it brilliant with hope despite passing shadows, and promise the highest surprises.



DANAIADE



## THE WORK OF RODIN

### RODIN AND VICTOR HUGO

The creation of "The Burghers of Calais" marks the middle of a period of truly prodigious fecundity. From 1889 to 1896, monuments, busts, statues, and groups of every kind issue without interruption from the ateliers of Rodin, and the more numerous the works his hand models, the more it grasps the contexture of the work, the more it refines the execution. Orders for portraits pour in; collectors hold it an honor to possess a marble, a bronze, signed with a name which every day increases in celebrity. In 1888 comes that jewel of marble, the bust of Madame Morla Vicuña, and the monument to Claude Vicuña, president of the Republic of Chile; in 1889, the bronze portrait of Dalou, the statue of Bastien-Lepage, that admirable head "La Pensée," acquired by the Musée du Luxembourg.

In 1890 comes the portrait of Mme. Russell, a bust in silver, of noble simplicity, which one would say was the head of a Roman matron, with the luminous veil upon her thoughtful forehead and the flower of goodwill blossoming upon her delicately swelling mouth. Then there is "The Danaïd," "La vieille Heaulmière," and a great study, a long woman's torso, "La Terre."

In 1892, not to mention delightful minor works like "The Young Mother" and "Brother and Sister," ap-

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pear two masterpieces: the bust of Puvis de Chavannes and that of Henri Rochefort, magnificent contrasts in construction and execution. The painter-gentleman carries his haughty head like an old leaguer chief, and the pamphleteer bends over the destinies of France, which for fifty years he has defended day in, day out, with his flaming pen, an enormous brow—a brow like a spherical vault that seems to contain a world.

“You have made it grander, you have made it more beautiful than nature,” some one said to Rodin one day.

“One can never do anything so beautiful as nature,” he replied.

In this same year, 1892, he exhibited the charming monument to Claude Lorrain, in which he recaptured the spirit of the eighteenth century. It was the town of Nancy that ordered this figure of its painter and has placed it in its vast park.

One cannot mention everything. Forms and attitudes renew themselves, but not the terms that express them. To measure the abundance of this work one should read the catalogue, till now incomplete,—for it has been impossible to compile one that was not so,—of the master’s works; only so can we realize how almost dizzily his productiveness became accelerated with the epoch of his maturity. Mythological subjects

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dominate it, but are always treated with a profoundly human understanding of the poetry and the grace of the form in which they achieve an aspect delightfully new.

Such titles as "Venus and Adonis," "The Education of Achilles," "The Death of Alcestis," "Cupid and Psyche," "The Faun and the Fountain," "Pygmalion and Galatea," Rodin inscribed only as an afterthought on the pedestals of his groups. They are not the result of a necessary preliminary conception; it is his figures themselves that breathe them, his models unconsciously repeated the combinations of movement and gesture through which are translated the eternal sentiments immortalized by the legends of paganism. So true is this that Rodin obtained his charming groups by assembling in harmony with his researches the animated little figures that encumbered the windows of his ateliers. He amused himself by uniting them, by marrying their attitudes; with these little figures, these puppets of genius, he composed actual little intimate dramas or idylls revived from the antique. In the hollow of a Greek bowl he places a little nude body, and one would say that it is the soul of the wave that conceals itself against the side of the vase. He enlaces three feminine figures, upright, beside the body of a recumbent youth: they are the Graces, who come to bend over the dying

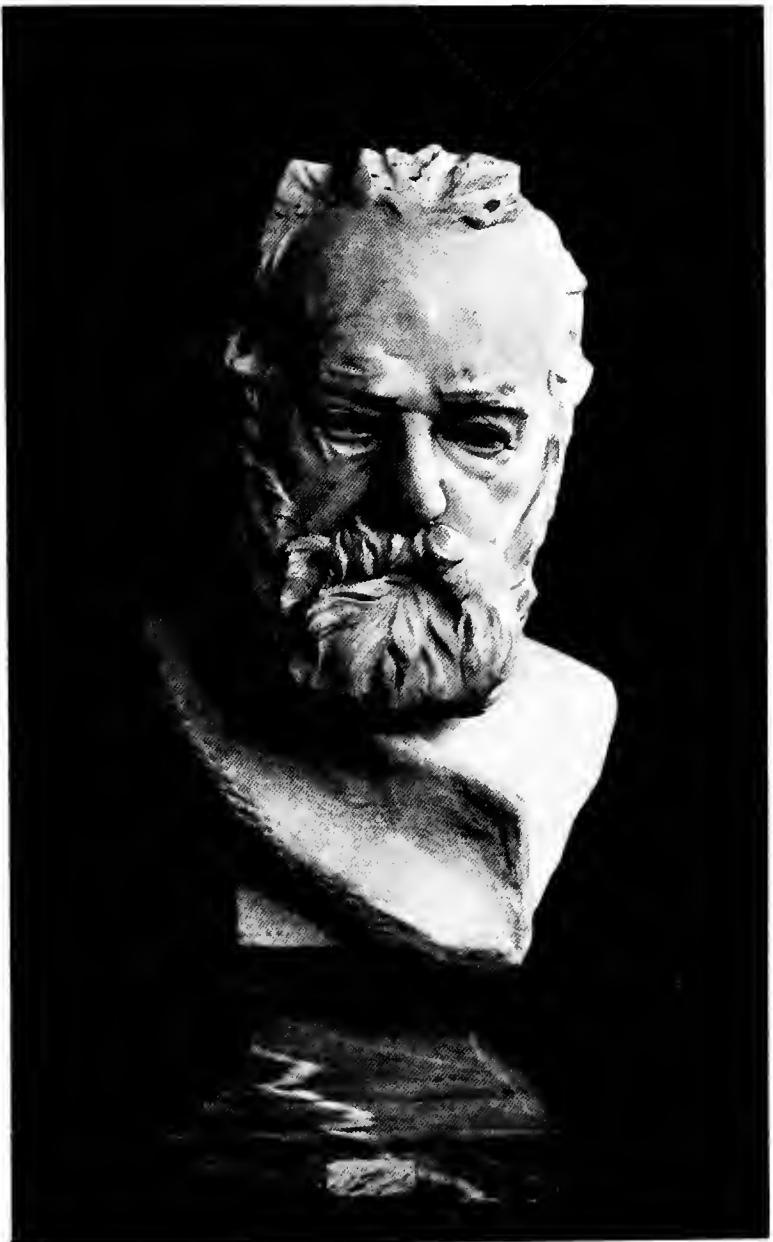
## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

poet. Thus he perpetuates the fantasy of things through that of his own taste; he eternalizes the most delicious caprices of nature.

We come now to the year 1896 and the appearance of the "Monument to Victor Hugo."

This monument had been ordered for the Panthéon. Rodin, who had modeled in 1885 the bust of the singer of the "Légende des Siècles," was doubly, on this account, entitled to the order. In the midst of what difficulties had he achieved that bust! It required all his patience, all the tenacity of a Lorrainese peasant, to accomplish it. When he had begged the honor of reproducing those illustrious features, the poet, already nearing his end, tired out with having posed for mediocre plaster-daubers and unaware of the superiority of his new sculptor, consented to pose only for two hours. All the same, he authorized Rodin to come as often as necessary and make as many sketches as he needed while he, Hugo, worked or received his friends.

Rodin accepted these difficult conditions. Was it not Victor Hugo with whom he was dealing, the father of modern poetry? And then what a spectacle for his artist's eyes, that of the great man bending over his papers that Jupiter-like head of his in which thought, in gestation, swelled the sublime brow with a tumult of



PORTRAIT BUST OF VICTOR HUGO



## THE WORK OF RODIN

ideas! When he talked, what majesty in “this face of a lion in repose”!

The sculptor placed a stool, some clay, some tools in the corner of a gallery; it was there that he worked out the general form of the bust. Then, studying his wonderful model for months, he made hundreds of sketches of him, under every aspect; at times, having used up the pages of his note-books, he even covered entire blocks of cigarette paper with rapid notes and jottings. Then he transferred this record of observations to his clay. Working in this manner, it took him three months to finish his bust. He exhibited it, in bronze, at the Salon of 1884. One cannot fail to admire the volumes, the beautiful mass of the whole, even though it does not show that brilliant touch of genius which strikes us before the bust of Jean-Paul Laurens or that of Rochefort; but later, relying upon this document and upon his own special memory of forms in action, Rodin was to restore for us this moving head in his monument of the poet, which was to be one of his very loftiest works. This same bust of Victor Hugo was to rupture the friendship between Rodin and Jules Dalou—Dalou of whom he sent to the same Salon of 1884, by a curious coincidence, an incomparable bust that puts one in mind of those of Donatello.

The family of Victor Hugo did not like Rodin’s portrait of the master. When the poet died (1885),

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

it was Dalou whom they called to execute a death-mask of the features of the great poet. Filled with ambition and eager for official glory, Dalou had the weakness to accept, forgetting what he owed to Rodin, not even informing him, in fact. Deeply hurt, the latter withdrew his affection for his old friend. My father, saddened by this occurrence, which destroyed so rare and noble a friendship, brought the two friends together at his table in the hope of reconciling them; but nothing could melt the wall of ice that had fallen between these dissevered hearts.

Ten years afterward a magnificent compensation was offered to Rodin. From him was ordered the monument of the poet for the Panthéon. He represented him nude, under the folds of a vast cloak, and seated on a rock, as if by the seashore, with his wonderful head bowed in an attitude of meditation, just as Rodin had often contemplated it in priceless hours.

This manner of representing a great man, quite simply revived from the Renaissance and the eighteenth century, shocked to the last degree the administrative staff of the department of fine arts. Why this nude personage, instead of a quite respectable Victor Hugo in the frock-coat of an academician? Why not one of those statues that peacefully occupy some corner of a public square without attracting any one's atten-

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tion, one of those statues that are not made to be looked at? As for this poet, who resembled a Homer, a hero or a demigod, this grand body, outrageously beautiful and simple, is it not scandalous in the midst of the conformity of bourgeois civilization, enslaved by the ugliness of fashion, whose perverted taste can no longer recognize the beauty of the nude? The painter David used to say of his epoch, in which, however, the mode of dress was less displeasing than it is to-day, "What misery to be obliged to spend one's life in fashioning coats and shoes!" Rodin, like David, and like Phidias, preferred the trade of the sculptor to that of the tailor.

Such an uproar arose that he had to withdraw the model of his monument and promise another. But everything comes with time, even the best: the fortunes of politics brought to the ministry of fine arts an intelligent and cultivated director, the dramatic critic Gustave Larroumet. Delighted with Rodin's scheme, the magnificent symbolization of French poetry, he confirmed the order for the audacious monument, no longer for the Panthéon, but for the Luxembourg Gardens; and, not satisfied with this reparation, charged the master with the additional execution of another monument destined for the Panthéon. One can imagine the anger in certain circles—two orders on the same subject to the same sculptor! What an aberration!

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

What madness! But the decision was made and well made.

Rodin took six years to perfect his first "Victor Hugo"; the marble was not exhibited until 1901. The vigor of the work and the sovereign gesture by which the bard of contemplation seems to impose silence upon the voice of nature in order that the voices struggling within himself, in the depths of his genius, may be the better heard, the suppleness of the material, of this Carrara marble, with its warm reflections, as if melted under the pressure of a fiery hand, obstinately make one think of Michelangelo; one has the disturbing sensation, not of an imitation, but of a resurrection of the plastic power reincarnated out of nature, of a new spring of sap from the same vein of genius.

The original plan allowed, in addition, for two allegorical figures, "The Inner Voice" and "The Tragic Muse," which, placed beside the poet, should breathe into him thought and inspiration. But, very beautiful in themselves, they gave to the monument, once they were executed and placed, an anecdotal quality that diminished its force; they weakened the grandeur of the Olympian gesture and destroyed that feeling of solitude inseparable from such a personality as that of the great man: an island in the midst of the flood of the human multitude, genius itself is aware of its own splendid isolation.





MONUMENT TO VICTOR HUGO

## THE WORK OF RODIN

This is what I ventured to express one day to the master, not without hesitation. Nothing equals the simplicity of Rodin face to face with what he knows is sincere and animated by a true love of art. He listened, gazed at his work, and, turning toward me, gave me a joyous glance.

“You are right,” he replied, with a spontaneity that put my sense of responsibility on its mettle. “I sacrificed to the mania of the age, which is to overload things. My modeling is there, the eloquence of the gesture also. The rest would only spoil the essential things. It is a stroke of genius. I am going to write to the under-secretary of state that my monument is ready.”

In lieu of the two figures that were to have accompanied the statue of Victor Hugo, to indemnify the Government Rodin gave to the Musée du Luxembourg a series of his most beautiful busts in bronze, including the head of the poet.

As for the marble, it was in the garden of the Palais Royal that it was finally erected; but this site is not of the happiest: a large lawn separates the spectator from the monument; one sees it from the wrong angle, and this destroys the equilibrium of its planes. Moreover, in our damp climate marble quickly loses the charm of its purity and transparency; streaks of brown already stain and deface that of the “Victor Hugo.” Let us

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hope that the organizers of the Musée Rodin will find it possible to place it in one of the rooms of the future museum, substituting for it a bronze upon which the inclemencies of the atmosphere will serve to produce a beautiful patina.

### THE STATUE OF BALZAC (1898)

This is the most famous and the least known of Rodin's works. Newspaper controversies have made it famous throughout the whole world; but it has, nevertheless, made only one brief appearance in public, in 1898, at the Salon of the Société Nationale des Beaux Arts. It marks at the same time a vital stage in the career of the master and the most poignant period of his life as a fighter. It is the point of equilibrium in the perpetual balancing of the art of Rodin between the several great traditions. It was the object of a famous quarrel, in which the glory of the sculptor, momentarily all but eclipsed by ridicule, recovered itself, nevertheless, and rose higher than ever.

What strikes one in this statue, at first sight, is its strange block-like aspect, its monolithic simplicity. People say quite rightly that it looks like a stone *lovée*, a druidic monument. Ever since "The Burghers of Calais," one of the figures of which at least, that of the man with the key, already suggests the idea of a monolith, Rodin had been going further and further in his

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stubborn search for the simplification of planes, and here he finally achieved his object. In order to obtain it, he went back all the way to the primitive Gothic and even to the archaic Greek, which likewise preserves in the general outline of its statues the rigid aspect of those statues of wood that had preceded it. In all these early epochs of art one finds the form of the tree trunk in which their sculpture was cut. One of the examples of this art that had most forcibly impressed Rodin was the statue of Hera of Samothrace in the Louvre. The beauty of this figure, denuded of all foreign artifice in the exact research for masses, the public little comprehends; but the sculptor perceives its justness, the power of its relief and its modeling, disconcerting in these primitive artists, qualities that are concealed under the extreme simplicity of its appearance. In this magnificent Hera it is as if one saw the rotundities of woman coming to birth and undergoing in the tree, the vegetal column, one of those metamorphoses familiar in the fables of paganism. The "Balzac," with its athletic body, veiled in a spread robe that envelopes it, does not it also resemble a powerful tree trunk from the summit of which looks down, like a solitary, monstrous flower, the head of the inspired writer?

This statue had been ordered by the Société des Gens de Lettres, and was intended for one of the public

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squares of Paris. After Victor Hugo, Balzac. After the giant of modern poetry, the giant of the novel. What a redoubtable honor, but also what a homage to the talent of the great sculptor! What joy for artists in the association of these two names, Balzac and Rodin! On the other hand, how many adversaries rejoiced in the hope of seeing Rodin come to grief with this task, fraught not less with peril than with glory! He did not conceal from himself that the statue of Balzac would be a severe problem to solve. We possess no authentic bust of the creator of the "Comédie Humaine," not even a death-mask giving the exact measure of the cranial bones and hence the actual planes. We know through his contemporaries that the author was fat and short. Fat and short—that is far from facilitating the composition of a work of decorative art. But, more precious than mediocre portraits, there is a famous page about him by Lamartine, another great genius. "Balzac," he says, "was the figure of an element . . . stout, thick-set, square at the base and at the shoulders, ample, much as Mirabeau was; but not heavy in any way; he had so much soul that it carried *him* lightly."

It was this essence that he set out to render. A frank artist takes no liberties with reality. It alone gives him force; the "majesty of the true" is alone durable. Nature, which dowered Balzac with one of the most



STATUE OF BALZAC



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prodigious intellects known to us, dowered him at the same time, to support this intellect, with the physical breadth of a colossus. To have altered anything that went to make up the harmony of the structure would have been to commit a grave error; it would have been to denaturalize the divine work. On the other hand, above this mass of flesh it was necessary to make that marvelous spirit hover, that sparkling spirit, that myriad-faceted spirit of the greatest of novelists.

Rodin knows by experience that nature repeats herself. Has not a humorist said: "It is useless to make a bust of you; it exists already. You have only to look for it in the museums"?

He set out to find a man who resembled Balzac, going all the way to Touraine, the writer's native province, a hundred times depicted by him in his books. The family of Balzac was originally from Languedoc, but that made no difference; the intuition of a great artist is always rewarded. Rodin found at Tours the model he desired; he was a young countryman, a carter, who resembled his hero to an almost miraculous degree. Of him he made a very animated bust, in which one sees the full face, the nose, concave and large at the end, but voluptuous and full of spirit, the rounded chin, the vast shoulders of the master of the "Comédie Humaine." There was lacking, however, the flame of thought that spiritualized and rendered buoyant this

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mass of human substance. Rodin modified the expression, illuminating the physiognomy with delicacy and frank gaiety. It is Balzac at twenty-five, a peasant Balzac, breathing at every pore youth, self-confidence, and the love of life. Not yet is it the man tormented by fate, the tragic visionary of the "Comédie Humaine," the slave of his work who in twenty years wrote fifty novels, staged a thousand characters, and gave life to an entire society. It is not the man who has suffered, thought, meditated, with all the power of one of the most extraordinary organisms known to us; it has not the appearance of a phenomenon.

— After this Rodin skilfully altered these features; he gave them the scars of the interior effort, he made them soft and hollowed them, he made them old and grave. In a few weeks he did the work that nature had taken years to accomplish. He finished by creating that Titan's mask which we know, that head as round as a bullet and, like a bullet, terrible in its concentrated force. Later he augmented this; that is to say, he doubled its proportions: and this head, almost frightening in its expression, recalls the masks which the Greek tragedians wore when they played in the open air. Finally he modeled the body of the colossus, making it entirely nude, with arms crossed, braced against the earth with the tension of the whole will, evoking the idea of some prodigious birth. Then he draped this heavy body in

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the monk's robe in which the writer used to envelope himself for work and the straight folds of which enwrapped him like the sheath of a mummy, offering to the sight nothing but the tumultuous head—the head ravaged by intelligence and savage energy.

Rodin felt almost frightened by his own work.

He kept it a long time before turning it over to the cast-makers. He had worked it out in his atelier, but it was destined for the open air. How would it appear in broad daylight?

The gestation of this work was accompanied by a thousand miseries. The committee of the Société des Gens de Lettres incessantly demanded the "Balzac"; they were dumfounded before the extraordinary figure that was shown to them, before this white phantom the conception of which was so utterly the reverse of all current ideas. Not knowing what to say, they insisted that it should be modified and urged haste upon Rodin, whose extraordinary dexterity became slowness itself when it was a question of putting the final touches upon a great work. The press began to take note of the affair. He himself became troubled and nervous. With what transports would he have left it, fled, gone away to rest and to dream of something else for a few weeks! The time of the Salon was approaching. Quite suddenly he made his decision, gave the clay to be cast, and ordered an enlargement. The statue was

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brought back to him at the Dépôt des Marbres, in the rue de l'Université; it was twice as large as the original model. It was placed in the garden that stretched out in front of the studio. He examined it as it rose against the depths of the open sky and the bright spring light. It was as if he had never seen it, and suddenly his mind was illuminated. The work was grand, simple, strong; the essential modeling was there, and the details they had exhorted him to add would only have diminished its unsurpassable unity.

Rodin had made up his mind. He sent his "Balzac" to the Salon.

Immediately there was war. The press, worked upon by the committee of the Société des Gens de Lettres, was unfavorable in advance. On the day of the opening of the Salon the word was passed around, and the official art world *s'esclaffe*. There was a crowd at the foot of the lofty image, near which Rodin took up his position, calm according to his wont, and talked quietly with his friends. Some, a very few, told him how they admired this work so proudly offered, so strange in its banal surroundings.

The next day the press broke forth. What an uproar! Everything went off at once: the heavy artillery of the great newspapers scolded solemnly, the light artillery crackled in the political sheets, and the grape-shot of the minor papers spat their rage, only too



THE HEAD OF BALZAC



## THE WORK OF RODIN

happy for so rich a prey to cut to pieces. The Institute, as might have been foreseen, fanned the conflagration. The public, excited, in turn broke loose, in the fury of ignorance stirred up against knowledge.

It became a "case," an affair, the *affaire de Balzac*. The committee of the Société des Gens de Lettres mobilized; by a vote of eleven to four it declared that it "did not recognize the writer in the statue of M. Rodin." The president of the same society, the poet Jean Aicard, refused the chance of immortality which this stupidity was to confer upon his colleagues and flung his resignation in their faces. A group of members of the municipal council of Paris decreed that it would be ridiculous to accord "this block" a place in one of the squares of the city. For two months music-halls and café-concerts vented every evening the wit of the gutter on the scandalous statue and its sculptor; peddlers sold caricatures of it in plaster, Balzac being represented as a heap of snow or as a seal. In short, such was the event that it required nothing but the pen of Aristophanes to note down the harmonies of this chorus of frogs. The health of Rodin suffered a reaction from his long effort and from this battle. Then, too, there are hours when the strongest are seized with nausea before the bad faith and the stupidity of people. Nervous, his mind aching, a prey to insomnia, the master offered a melancholy spectacle, that beautiful seren-

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ity of his destroyed and his working strength put in jeopardy.

“For all that,” says M. Léon Riotor, who tells the story with eloquence, “Rodin had a wonderful awakening. All the young world of letters rose up to declare its sympathy with the vanquished in this new skirmish. A number of painters and sculptors joined in. And the protest that was circulated came back covered with signatures.”

No, Rodin was not vanquished. He retired for a moment from the mêlée to recover and to meditate in peace, but without deviating by a single step from his line of conduct. A collector offered to buy the “Balzac.” A group of intellectuals started a public subscription; funds flowed in. Although he was not yet wealthy, Rodin courteously declined these offers, and, declaring that “an artist, like a woman, has to guard his honor,” decided to withdraw his monument from the Salon and not have it erected anywhere.

The epic statue was transported to Meudon, and placed in the garden of the villa. In its loftiness it imposes itself against the sky, against the hills, against the trees that surround it, with the quality of nature herself. Like a gigantic pole it triumphs in the open air. It is specially on clear nights that its disturbing authority strikes the soul. The great phantom appears then formidable in the extreme simplicity of its planes,

## THE WORK OF RODIN

which, as in strong architecture, distribute over large spaces the masses of shadow and light. The American painter Steichen has passed nights in this enchanted garden in order to take of the “Balzac” photographs that are more beautiful than engravings. Haughty, with a ferocious majesty in the moonlight, the master of the “Comédie Humaine” brings his soul face to face with nature; he listens to its silence, he sounds its mysteries, he questions it in mute dialogue, the like of which has not been heard since the colloquy of *Hamlet* with the shade of his father. For it is of *Hamlet*, of the most profound symbolization of the human spirit wrestling with the unknown, that one dreams before this meditating Balzac, alone, under the nocturnal light. This is what Rodin has known how to make out of that short, thick-set man who was the author of the “Etudes Philosophiques”; this is how he has lighted the fires of the intelligence on the mask of genius.

It is at the Musée Rodin that we shall rediscover this statue. Time will have progressed, and ideas also. When they see it anew, how many people will be astounded at having formerly scoffed at the work and offended the master, struck dumb and secretly humiliated at having thus contributed to the writing of the hundred thousandth chapter of that endless book, the book of human stupidity.

## RODIN: THE MAN AND HIS ART

### THE EXPOSITION OF 1900—THE BAS-RELIEFS OF EVIAN—RODIN AND THE WAR

In 1899, Rodin exhibited a large part of his work at Brussels and in Holland. The effect produced upon artists and upon the cultivated portion of the public was such that he resolved to repeat this experiment at the Universal Exposition of Paris.

It was foreordained that nothing should be easy for the great toiler, that it would be necessary for him to conquer everything through effort and struggle.

The administration of the Exposition, which had granted innumerable requests for space addressed to it by the industrialists and business men of the whole world, by bar-keepers, itinerant booth-holders, and managers of café-concerts, raised a thousand difficulties when it was a question of according a few feet of ground to the greatest of living sculptors. It required all the insistence of his most devoted and powerful friends to gain his point. Rodin finally received the authorization to construct a pavilion not in the Exposition itself, but outside the grounds in the place de l'Alma.

Once again, so much the better. How much finer for a man of the élite to stand aside from the rout!

According to the master's plan, there was erected a hall simple in appearance, elegant, reservedly in the



THE STUDIO AT MEUDON



## THE WORK OF RODIN

Louis XVI style, a veritable repose for the eye strained by the strident architecture of the great fair of 1900. There were assembled the people of his sculpture.

Once more Rodin experienced an hour of trial, a formidable hour. If for the last dozen years he had left poverty behind, he had not yet achieved wealth, and it was a great risk to assume the expenses of his exhibition. If these expenses were not covered by the entrance-fees and the sale of his sculpture, how would he come out? He would be forced to a kind of transaction that he had always spurned, he would have to turn over all or part of his work to the art dealers. These groups, these busts, so painstakingly cast, or cut in the most beautiful marble by excellent workmen, and often by renowned sculptors, once the dealers had acquired rights in them, would they not be duplicated in a quantity of replicas of mediocre workmanship or, worse, reproduced by undiscriminating stone-cutters, who would disfigure the modeling and the character? The idea was odious to the scrupulous sculptor. He had reached the age of sixty, and if he did not show it, thanks to the vigor of his temperament and the persistent youth that goes with great minds, it was not less painful for him to put his apprehensions to the test. Too dignified, too proud, to give way to vain lamentations, he made only the most reserved references to his ordeal.

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The success of the exhibition remained uncertain during the first weeks: many people hoped it would be a failure. At the end of a month or two, visitors from abroad, to whom thanks be given, began to pour in; the principal museums of Europe wished to possess some important figure of Rodin's. Soon the number of purchasers increased day by day, and I do not have to mention here how many art-lovers from the United States decided to enrich their collections with some rare piece signed by the master. In short, during the latter months Rodin had the joy of perceiving that he could remain the sole possessor of his work, that nothing could now separate him from his dear family of bronze and marble. It was happiness for him; it signalized also the great glory that comes with outstretched wing, bringing fortune with it.

The pretty pavilion in the place de l'Alma was transported and reerected in the garden at Meudon, and he filled it with masterpieces. Since then the whole world of art and literature and that portion of the political world that esteems art has passed through it. The French aristocracy and that of England, the most eminent personages of the two Americas, have been eager to visit it. One receives in it an impression at once grand and touching, giving one the highest idea of the supremacy of intellectual valor above the other goods of this world when one perceives the contrast of these ar-

## THE WORK OF RODIN

tistic treasures with the altogether modest little house, almost bare, attended by a single servant, where Rodin continues, in the midst of the luxury of an epoch intoxicated with pleasures, to maintain the simplicity of his life in the sober company of his old single-spirited, faithful-hearted wife. This impression I never felt more vividly than on the occasion of the visit of the late King of England. Edward VII, like others, had conceived the desire to render this homage to French art. The day before, when I encountered the master in Paris, he said to me, without further explanation, "Come and have a look at the studio."

It was a beautiful afternoon in May. When I entered the pavilion, I could not restrain a cry of admiration. Marbles, nothing but marbles, of a dazzling whiteness! He had brought together all that he possessed, all those that his friends and the purchasers of his work had consented to lend him for the occasion, and one would have said that it was these groups of young, enlaced bodies, these busts of women, with their transparent, rosy flesh, that gave forth the light with which the apartment was filled. It was a unique vision, a vision which, in its purity and its unity, surpassed in delicate splendor that of the most celebrated collections, with all their accumulation of pictures, tapestries, bronze, and jewels. I wondered in silence; I wondered at the sure taste of the artist, but I wondered also at his

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will: everything of him was there. Who can deny that it was necessary for him to put pressure on himself to decide on such a choice, to sacrifice the bronzes, the sketches, the terra cottas, and many charming pieces? Nothing but marble, the kingdom of marble, but also that of life; for the sumptuous material trembled and palpitated under the play of the light that entered through the bay-windows of the atelier, bringing with it the soft brilliance of the season.

Since the Exposition of 1900, Rodin's reputation has increased steadily in France and abroad. England and Italy have organized triumphal receptions for him of a sort reserved hitherto for the most illustrious men of state. The artists of London have acclaimed him, and have charged him, on the death of Whistler, with the presidency of the International Society of Painters, Sculptors, and Engravers. Oxford University has given him a doctorate. The municipality of Rome has greeted him with special homage at the capitol; the court of Greece, having invited him, awaits his visit; at Prague, where he was received by the Society of Young Czech Artists, they accorded him royal honors, the public unharnessing the horses from his carriage and applauding at the same time the personal genius of this great Frenchman and the free ideas of his country.

Without altering in any way his life of labor, which these tributes have at times slightly interfered with, he

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## THE WORK OF RODIN

has permitted himself only one luxury as the result of his fortune—a collection of antiques. This he has formed with passion. It is, once more, for purposes of study, and what a study, to possess a few of these sublime fragments, to feel them and handle them under all aspects of light! Rodin has placed a certain number of them in his garden, arranging them among the trees, among the shrubs; he has placed them on the fresh grass, where they seem to live in another and a happier way than in the rooms of museums. At a stroke the little garden at Meudon, with its pedestals, its statues, with its grove where a charming little marble, the "Sleeping Cupid," reposes, has become like the villa of a Roman citizen of the time of Augustus.

The art of Rodin has in a certain measure shown the effect of these happy events. During these latter years he has grown calm; he displays a serenity of spirit and a self-possession that increases day by day. But if the struggle in his composition has been tranquilized, his workmanship has grown freer. The sculptor's effort concentrates itself now in the search for a modeling ever more ample and suppler, which with him constitutes a new and decisive manner. It is to this that we owe those exquisite marbles, "Psyche Bearing the Lamp," "Benedictions," "The Young Girl and the Two

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Genii," "Romeo and Juliet," "The Fall of Icarus." This has been the epoch also of the busts of Mrs. Simpson and the proud and handsome George Wyndham, the English statesman. It is the epoch, finally, of the "Monument to President Sarmiento," which offers at the same time, in happy opposition, the two most recent and most characteristic methods of Rodin. The bronze statue of the great Argentine statesman has an aspect at once romantic and realistic that recalls that of "The Burghers of Calais," and the marble pedestal that supports it, a vanquishing Apollo emerging from the clouds all luminous with youth and glory, belongs to the latest period. Of this monument, ordered by the city of Buenos Aires, France does not possess a replica, though the model has been preserved. The Musée Rodin will soon contain a duplicate.

From 1901 to 1906 there was an uninterrupted creation of figures and of portraits, among them the busts of Sir Howard Walden, Berthelot, Gustave Geffroy, Mme. Hunter, and Bernard Shaw.

One must add the myriad drawings that Rodin has never ceased to execute. The will to sustain his eye and his hand instead of permitting them to become weakened with age has become a passion with him. He draws as a writer thinks. He thinks pencil in hand; his drawings are aphorisms. Line-sketches, stump-drawings, water-colors in strange tints multiply them-

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selves like the leaves of a tree and quite constitute alone a complete work. The master has sold and given away quantities of them, yet; nevertheless, the Musée will contain more than three thousand. I have been honored with the charge of counting them over and classifying them. After days of this work one has a sensation of dazzlement, as I have discovered, before this accumulation of toil and beauty.

The most precious of these drawings are the most recent. The study of light has been carried in these to the supreme nuances. More and more Rodin detests what is black, what is hard, what is dry. He adores, on the other hand, that which is supple, enveloped, drowned in the light mist of the atmosphere. He conceives everything through an almost imperceptible veil which softens the contours, and which he discerns with an eye that grows every day more sensitive. His sculpture has followed the same path. In the greater part of his marbles he has pursued the effects of mass and of the ensemble in what concerns the volumes and the effects of gradation, the study of the diminutions of light in what concerns the coloring. The color that obtains uniquely in the art of shadow and light is the charm of beautiful sculpture. Rodin thus captures the variations with a competence that ravishes our eyes, accustomed to the dryness of limits that are too distinct. It is in the reliefs entitled "The Seasons" that Rodin

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has attained the apogee of this science of luminous modeling.

These works, executed for La Sapinière, the estate of Baron Vitta at Evian, comprise three high-reliefs fashioned on a gate and two fountain basins, or monumental garden urns. They are cut in the stone of the Estail-lade, a white stone the richness of grain and delicate golden tone of which make it unsurpassable for the interpretation of the human body. They were exhibited for a short time in February, 1905, at the Musée du Luxembourg, on the initiative of M. Léon Bénédict, the very accomplished curator and critic of art, who arranged them with perfect taste. But far from being embraced and vindicated, as he would be now by the present administration of fine arts, Rodin was still regarded as a revolutionist whose example could neither be followed nor trusted.

This was made quite plain to the audacious curator who decided quite by himself to exhibit the latest works of the master before their departure for Evian. After this *coup d'état* he was for several years the victim of attacks from academic circles, and underwent, on the part of the Government, a sort of disgrace. Since then he has been brilliantly compensated, and to-day he has been placed in charge of the installation of the Musée Rodin at the Hôtel Biron, a great work in which I have the happiness to be his collaborator.

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The decorative designs of the villa of Evian adorn the vestibule of the home of Baron Vitta. "Their subject," says M. Bénédite, in an excellent notice which served as a catalogue for the Exhibition of 1905, "if one wishes to speak of the motive that serves as their pretext, is the most banal in the world. One would find it difficult to count the number of times that it has served artists since antiquity. So true it is that the commonest, the most general, the most seemingly worn-out themes are those in which the great artists find themselves the most at home. Without difficulty they renew them, and stamp them unforgettably with their own peculiar mark. Rodin has calmly returned to the four seasons, confident that they would bear without effort the impress of his personality and his time and that they would suffice to express his whole conception of beauty and of life."

Rodin has figured "The Seasons" under the aspect of four sleeping women. Their beautiful forms model themselves in the warm-tinted stone, which itself seems animated with the reflections of the living flesh. Their mysterious sleep evokes the successive phases of the year. Now it marks the quietude of the earth, full of the joy of yielding up her flowers and her fruits under the caresses of the sun, now it is death revealing itself through a nature tormented with the heavy travail of generation. In the "Spring" it is a young body that

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lies voluptuously under a rose-bush the fragrant petals of which are mingled with her own flesh, enveloping her in the dream of their perfume. In the "Autumn," the sleeper crouches close to the ground under the fruits and the vine-leaves, oppressed by the intoxicating aroma. The "Winter" presses her chilled limbs closely against the cavities of the denuded earth, while above her the roots of the trees enlace themselves intricately, like sacred serpents charged with protecting her slumber. The "Summer" is a siesta upon the bosom of a Nature *en fête*, lulled by the golden sounds of harvest balanced on the breeze and the murmur of a spring that pours forth freshness and quietude.

But in what, you ask, resides the originality of these decorative commonplaces, their brilliant, unquestionable originality? In the deliberate simplicity, in the spirit of sobriety that has presided over their composition, and, above all, in their execution. It is through their execution that the sculptures of Evian occupy a place apart in the work of Rodin. Since the beautiful Greek epoch, stone has perhaps never assumed such a living sweetness under any human hand. One might believe that it had not been touched by the steel of the chisel, but caressed by a touch as delicate as it is firm, molded like wax under the warmth of that hand. These mellow figures do not detach themselves from

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the living framework in which they are set; they stand out, thanks to an insensible transition which leaves them enveloped, in the reflections of the fair material; they mass themselves under a sifted light, among the flowers and the clusters of grapes. With all this there is no insipidity. Under the skin one feels the plenitude of bodies rich with health, harmonious organisms: it is a force that has found its equilibrium, a force relaxing in sweetness. Strangely enough, when one seeks for antecedents to which it is possible to relate the reliefs of Evian, it is not in the domain of sculpture, but in that of painting, that one finds the terms of comparison. The intense power, carefully measured as it is, of this vibrant modeling and this color drenched in sunlight we find again among the tenderest creations of Correggio, of Rubens, and, closer to ourselves, of Renoir.

The two jardinières which complete this unique series represent groups of children mad with joy and with liberty; in the one case playing and jostling one another in a field of wheat, in the midst of the moving sea of spears, and in the other, spread out on the green summer grass, rapturously holding up in their little arms, already robust, the grapes heavy with wine. They are exquisite fantasies of movement, of grace, of mad life just beginning. Here, too, the flesh of these little

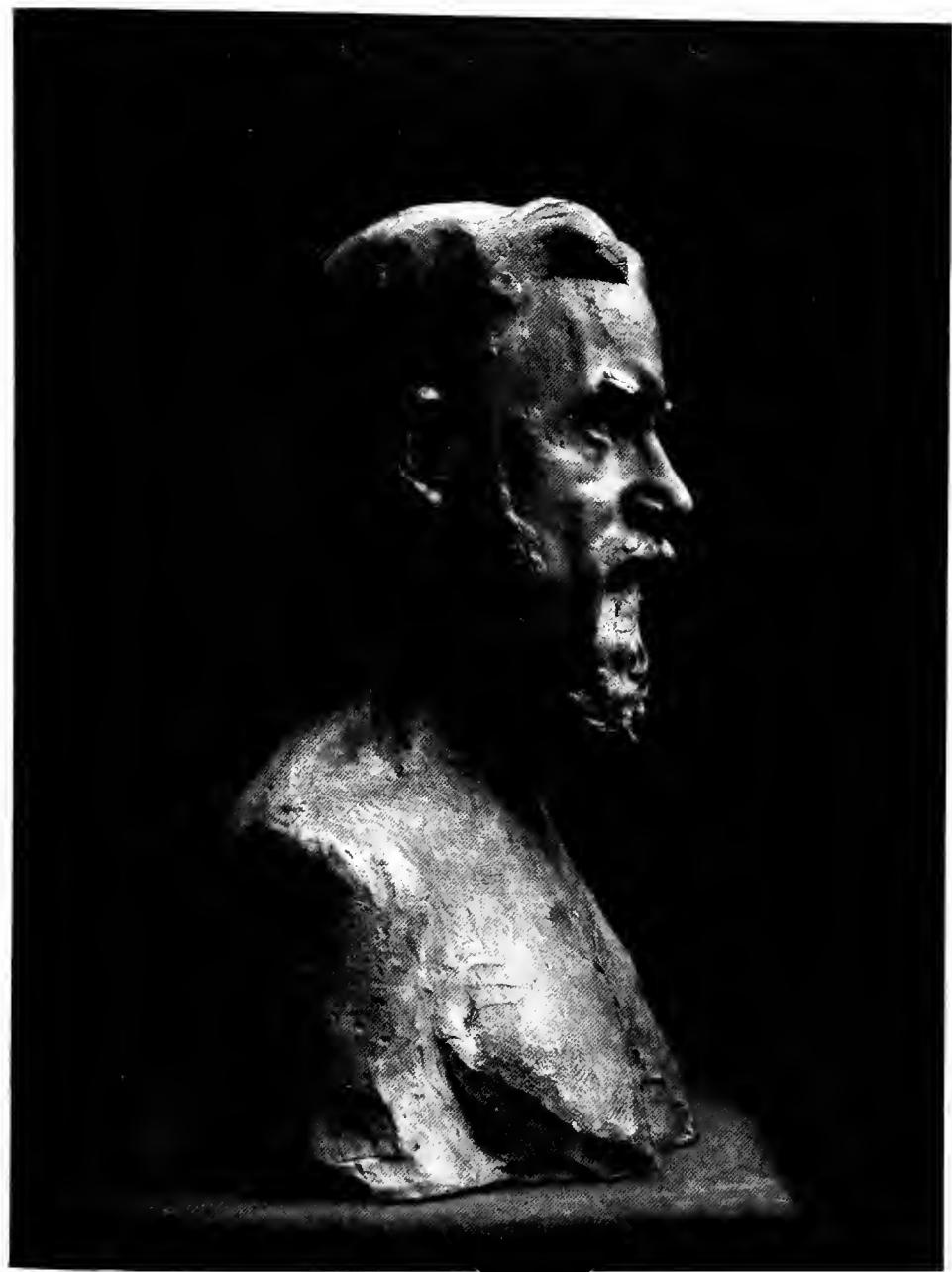
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laughing gods, melting in the mass of ripe corn and tottering vines, seems bathed in the clearness of a beautiful day, full of air and of light.

These five works of the old age of the master might be entitled the "Poem of Youth." It is the privilege of genius to return, in its decline, to its point of departure, to remount to the sources of life, which remain ever the most intoxicating. The sensations of infancy and adolescence solicit him with all their unforgettable seductiveness, and he surrenders himself lovingly to the sweetness of this lost dream; but it has cost him his entire existence to acquire the gift of translating it.

This search for the envelopment of forms fruitful of new effects is the decisive point in the career of Rodin; it is the supreme thought, the end and aim of sixty years of toil and reflection. Therefore it is a very happy thing for French sculpture that Rodin has been able to live long enough to realize completely this definitive conception of his art. For from the summit attained by him other artists can spring forth afresh, to renew once more perhaps the manifestations of the national genius. The resources indicated by Rodin have hardly been used hitherto; to bring them fully into employment meanwhile there will perhaps be born a new school of sculpture.

What constitutes the originality of a great artist is that it is never isolated. It belongs at once to the past,



BUST OF BERNARD SHAW



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to the present, and to the future; it is altogether a derivative and a root. It springs from the past through atavism, through study, and through admiration for the masters; it is of the present through contact with those of the artist's contemporaries who march at the same time with him along the road of discovery; finally, it influences the future by bequeathing to the generations that follow a new conception and new methods. Today we see clearly the sources from which have come the ultimate aspect of the talent of Rodin. They are the art of Greece; they are also certain marvels of Gothic art in which miraculously reblossomed the Hellenic suppleness and sweetness, as if the springs of the Greek genius had mysteriously coursed under the earth from Athens to France, bursting forth at last in the walls of our cathedrals; then there are those unfinished marbles of Michelangelo from which Rodin derived the idea of vapor and flow in sculpture. But other artists have arrived, at about the same time, at the same end, or almost the same end, by different paths. Among these are two of our great painters, friends and comrades of Rodin, Renoir and Carrière. Does not this community of thought prove how profound is the vitality our country continues to possess in the domain of art? We are less struck by this phenomenon than when we verify its effects in the past, when we see them related and summed up in the history of art; because we are not in a

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position to disengage it from our present life, which is encumbered and complicated, and to draw a conclusion from it. And then, too, the present political régime does little to signalize the great artists, to muster them before the untutored admiration of the multitude, to give value to the intellectual wealth of the country. As a rule, when a man of genius receives the homage he deserves, it is when he is near his end, if it is not after his death. What public festivals have been given in France in this century to honor the glories of our artistic and scientific life, Victor Hugo excepted? When and how have we celebrated men like Puvis de Chavannes, Rodin, Renoir, Carrière, Claude Monet, Besnard, Odilon Redon, and Bartholomé, to mention only masters of the chisel and the brush? Occasionally they have been gratified by the boredom of an official banquet, where they have been assigned a rank considerably lower than that of the least important politician, and they are expected to be thankful when they have had bestowed upon them a few parchments and some bits of ribbon. Fortunately, their joys are in another sphere, whither no one who is not their equal can follow them.

In their ardent effort toward a similar end, then, it is necessary to associate Rodin, Renoir, and Carrière. All three, for that matter, have mutually admired and even influenced one another. Whether in the course of

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their work or in their conversations, one cannot deny that the attempt of the Impressionist School, which consists precisely in not separating the being or the object from its atmosphere, in prolonging its life in the life of that which envelopes it, really succeeds only in the work of these masters. They have, if not recreated, at least broadened the law of the distribution of shadow and of light in their intricate fusion. Certainly others had already manifested and realized similar ways of seeing things, according to their various temperaments, such men as Fantin-Latour and Henner in the study of the human figure and Claude Monet in landscape. But, except for Monet, no one affirms them with the authority of a Rodin, a Carrière, a Renoir. If Carrière, too early interrupted by a cruel death, is a tragic, a somber genius, a genius of the Gothic line, which in him does not exclude great sweetness, Renoir and Rodin, in their maturity, are happy geniuses, masters of young beauty and of a serenity which art has scarcely known since ancient Greece. A like sentiment of serenity, a like aspiration for harmonious unity, therefore a closer contact with nature, bring them together.

This serenity, this aspiration for unity, Rodin and Renoir have sought during their whole life, and it is in the radiant works of their old age that it triumphs. The genius of form and its union with the universal has been the master thought, the plastic ideal, which

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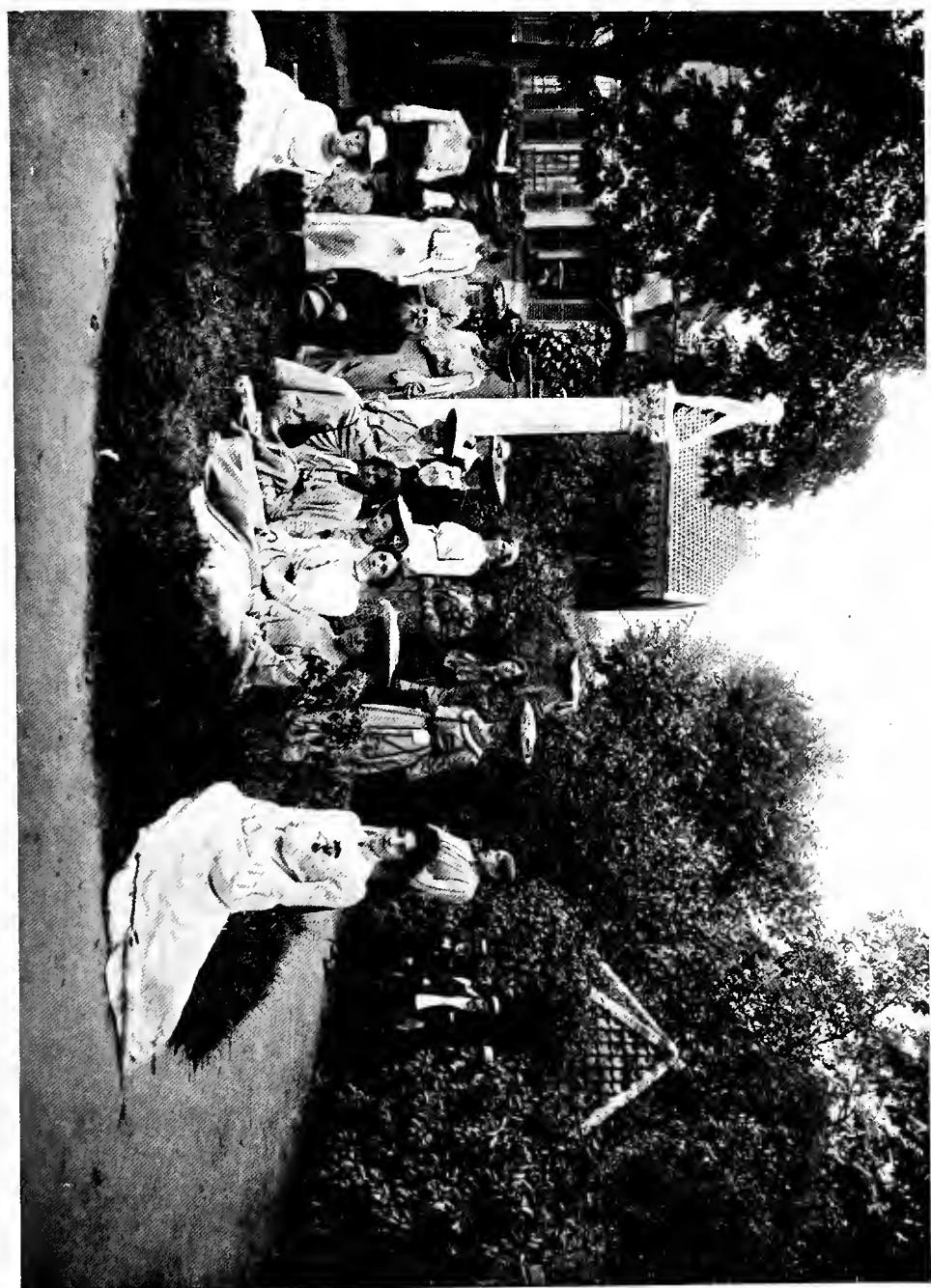
their fraternal minds have realized simultaneously by different methods.

“With Rodin a style begins,” said Octave Mirbeau twenty years ago. The phrase stirred up a tempest. All the time that has passed since then has been required to make people admit its truth. The great writer might have said with more exactitude, but with less force, “With Rodin style itself has begun anew.”

Will it continue? It has never entirely ceased to exist, even if it has no longer the force of expansion with which, from France and through her, it spread through all Europe. Will it begin again with its vigor as of old? The question touches those problems raised by the events that are to-day overturning the world and also the profound modifications which the war will bring.

The master gives us his opinion on this matter in a few words, circumspect and measured, as he himself always is. How could he be otherwise before the formidable unknown that still hides from us the next turn of destiny? It is fitting, then, to leave him the last word on this subject. Fortunately his word has the warm ring of hope.

This hope he draws in a measure from himself, from his own strength, which is, he feels, a distinct outgrowth of the national strength, of the unconquerable soul of our ancestors; he draws it also from the consciousness



A FÊTE GIVEN IN HONOR OF RODIN BY SOME OF HIS FRIENDS



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of a task accomplished in the face of the hard blows of life; and finally from the promise of the artistic youth of the country, of that which belongs to his school. For if with two or three exceptions he has not directly formed pupils, his artistic principles, his faith in the virtue of character and labor, supported by the example of an unequaled body of work, have given him innumerable disciples. The lesson which he offers us and which will soon be offered to all at the museum in the Hôtel Biron, will endure for centuries. He says himself justly, with pride and modesty, that this museum will form a true home of education.

A few words more about this life which in the fecundity of its unexpected incidents remains for the attentive witness profoundly significant to the very end.

At the moment when the war of 1914 broke out, the master was in his villa at Meudon. When the German armies approached Paris, he thought of leaving his home. He had excited great admiration in the land of Schiller and Goethe, he had been urged to take part in numerous expositions there; but he had quite special reasons for knowing that his work, were it to fall into their hands, would not be spared by the soldiers from beyond the Rhine. Overwhelmed by the terrifying surprise of the invasion, he did not know where to go.

As he had many friends in England, I offered to guide

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him there. He therefore crossed the channel, accompanied by his wife, the companion of his good and evil days. It was without a word of bitterness that he set out, without expressing a regret for all that he was leaving behind him. Before the immensity of the national misfortune he seemed to have completely forgotten the menace that hung over the work of his whole life. In the train that carried us by night to one of the French ports, he said in his clear and always tranquil voice: "Yes, I am leaving much behind me. It is the work of an entire life that will disappear, perhaps." That was all. This attitude of an old exiled king inspired a respect free from all compassion.

The fate of his collection of antiques caused him more disquietude.

"If they take them, that is nothing; they will still exist. But if they break them! They will have destroyed what is irreplaceable."

He did not wish to remain in London. Too many relationships would have hindered him from collecting himself and from preserving that dignity of solitude, that reserve of a refugee which was proper to his situation. He preferred to accompany us to a small country town, where for six weeks he lived a modest life, very retired, interested only, but passionately interested, in the reading of English newspapers, which we translated for him.

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When we apprised him of the burning of Rheims Cathedral, he replied with a laugh of incredulity. For two days he refused to believe it. It seemed to him an invention of the press designed to stir the public and increase recruiting. At last, convinced, he said, with inexpressible sadness: "The biblical times have come back again, the great invasions of the Medes and the Persians. Has the world, then, reached the point where it deserves to be punished for the egotistical epicureanism in which it has slumbered?" After this he became absorbed in his own thoughts.

The Battle of the Marne, in saving France and the world, saved also that little temple of art, the museum at Meudon. Rodin, on his return from England, found it intact.

He took up his work again, without a pause, with that unalterable patience of his—that patience of the peasant that turns him back to his field the moment the enemy has passed. He awaits there sadly the dawn of peace.

During the last months of the year 1916 the question of the Musée Rodin, broached five years ago, became again a living one; it was brought before the assembly. Certain of the master's adversaries who have not been calmed even by the events of the present affected a righteous indignation that the discussion of

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this question of art should at this moment have any place in the order of the day, and they tried to make people believe that it was he who had chosen this tragic hour for debates of this kind. Let us repeat that five years ago Rodin offered this gift to his country, and that the delay in settling the matter is imputable solely to the procrastination of public affairs.

On the day I write these lines the creation of the Musée Rodin has been determined upon. The two chambers have voted by a majority that proves that everything France contains in the way of cultivated intelligence desires to assure a home worthy of itself for the works of its greatest sculptor.

But before we have arrived there what other mishaps may not befall! It is too soon to write the history of the Musée Rodin. Its adventure is not less singular than all the others that have marked this long career, certain of which have been summed up in these pages. The more forceful the personality, the more it is in contradiction with the passions of the vulgar, the more are the incidents that spring up in the contact of these two opposite elements. It would require a whole volume to recount those that have punctuated the life of Rodin during these later years.

Despite the bitterness of the combat, the master has had nothing to complain of and does not complain. The outcome of his life-story is most beautiful, and if

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this beauty already strikes us, it is in the years to come that it will attain its full glory. For if the gesture with which Rodin offers to France his work and his dearest possessions is that of those who count in the annals of their country, no one perhaps has ever received such a homage as that which the country has bestowed upon him in the manner of accepting his gift. In the midst of war, in the very hour when the country is suffering unheard of evils, it has self-possession enough in the firmness of its indomitable soul to honor in a magnificent way the work of one of its sons—a work accomplished in time of peace. Turning its attention for an instant from the necessities of war, from the front where it struggles, suffers, and dies, it remains calm enough, sufficiently sure of itself, to offer to one of its heroes of toil, and of the thought which its soldiers defend, a testimony of its gratitude and admiration.

THE END













